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# ECHO

BY

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TO DEESHIE

TO DEESHIE

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## PROLOGUE

### THE GARDEN OF MEMORY

SHE was standing in the archway of the old London garden, with the river running broad and smooth behind her, still dripping from her bath, as though she were some wild thing that had at that moment come up out of the water.

There was the old look on her face, half wistful, half of challenge, as she stood there in her tiny perfectness, with her swimming suit clinging to her like green seaweed and with her long black tresses hanging dankly about her to show the softly rounded outlines beneath. From behind that dark veil, the eyes of Wild Things in deep waters set like green sloes under their leechy brows, searched out at me as though to bring back some memory that would not.

She looked at me as a mermaid might look at a man from behind the veil, from the dank of which, the September sun, as it set, struck a gleam of dull red, like the red of the *dilisk* that waves in the depths of Achil's green waters. Hollow-eyed, hollow-cheeked, she looked out at me, did my little comrade.

The broad brow running downwards with the sudden in-curve along the aspid jaw to the tiny pointed chin with sweetness in it. The short straight nose with the

delicate flaunt of nostril ; the eyes like the sun when it shines through the thin jade of breaking wave—all of them I knew as I had known them two thousand years ago in old Rome and as I had known them when we came rushing up the gullet of Dungarvan Bay half a thousand years later.

Oh ! for the blue vein on the straining arm, and the lash of the oars and the flash of sun and wind. Oh ! for the sun-slant on the wingéd helms and the crash of battle and the splintering of glassy sword on burnished steel. Oh ! for the nights of love and wine and the velvet of lifted flagon in the jumble of the winter nights and the sullen lift of golden star over the dragon sail and the thrash of quivering hull against the head-sea. Oh ! for the hot sand, for the white lunge and the blood-scent. Oh ! for all that is gone.

It is again as it was and ever will be, world without end. The girl with the eye of jade that looked down upon me under the burning suns of the arena as I fought with beasts and men. The girl who, a tiny image of ivory, sat with steady, burning eyes under low, wide brows amidst the thunder of the shouting thousands in the scent of the hot sand and warm blood and musky, feline skin. The girl who lay in my arms to swoon away a summer night in the belly of a Roman galley. The girl who dragged down my helméd head to hers as I sprang upon the Viking strand, when I had been, as we Northmen said, *paa Færd* to Ireland, where half a thousand years before I, upon my birthday morn, had first seen the light on the green hills of Connemara. The girl who comes to me now once more, in the garden of a London September with the same slant of the eye ; the same wistful challenge ; the same puzzlement.

For it is my fate always to know my little comrade and to remember, and it is hers never to know me but to thrill faintly to the echo of a lost memory. . . .

And now she will shake her head with quick impatience, as though to sweep something from her eyes, with the old seeking gesture. . . .

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# ECHO

## THE FIRST MEMORY

### IN THE SCHOOL OF LUPUS

AND I am back in the school of old Lupus—cunning  
scarred Lupus, artist of death. Lupus, with his  
marked hide and white seam running from n  
scalloped ear. Lupus, with the sinful  
and the slouched running  
arm with its lie  
neath, the  
lure  
I

he is fainting, now at head, now at stomach, with the point of his blunted steel kissing my skin, white gleaming in the Roman sunlight.

"Thus—and thus—and thus!

"Lower, boy, lower. The low guard for the rip and the high guard for the cut, with the sidestep. That great frame of yours was not built for dancing, and yet you move like a dancing girl in that green kilt. Keep that red mane and sheering nose of yours well forward over your man so that you may always fight within yourself. Ever a little less than you can, little brother. In the hot sand and the blood-stench, the little less spells life and victory at the end of the long day. . . ." And then he had added: "Although, indeed, none of this may save you from the net and claws of Clistris the Cat."

Cut and rip—slash and point. Guard and riposte. Then, one day, perhaps, the long low upward lunge, am Lupus as from all, with death sitting at the  
of that I will speak later, in its

d I am

ny

desert places in burning heat and icy nip; have faced side by side howling beast and howling wind.

But of that I cannot speak of memory—only of faith. For what has been will be, world without end. We meet; we love; we part. But we meet again and yet again without remembering or knowing—save only those strange souls like myself who cannot forget, souls that in every life are the same, yet different. And if it happens that in my story I pass from one man to the other, it is not I, but the law of life and memory that is the offender.

The girl stood there in the archway, a girl with a fillet of silver across the low, broad forehead, confining her dark hair, done low on the neck after the fashion of the Greeks.

I saw that her slender hands were undecked save for a great green stone that showed sullen on the first finger of her left hand—a wondrous gem that might have been fished up from the bottom of the sea. And between the small rounded bosoms, a dusky red carnation hung.

She, in her small chiselled perfection, might stand somewhere with the crown of her head level to my elbow—I whom no man in Rome could look between the eyes. By her side stood a young man—a patrician as I could see—a man who but for his toga might have been a girl, but with brown stinging eyes and a hatchet-shaped head with a strange protuberance behind.

With him was a tall blonde girl, with hair of golden ashes and brown eyes set under slender dark brows. And of this girl, the lady Thora, I will say but one thing—for she scarcely steps into this history and does so, only to step out again as will be seen—she had looked upon me, the Shadow, with eyes of desire, as, indeed, if

it comes to that, so did many noble Roman women of that day, and she had sent her messengers to me. But I, for reasons that will show themselves as my story proceeds, would not.

And in Rome it was said that she was a <sup>selfish</sup> rival for Nero's favour with the little dark girl by her side—and that they were friends who hated in secret. However that may be, the little dark woman had caught the brazen admiration of the blonde as she gazed upon me with her bold brown eyes and pale cheeks and the great coil of ashy hair done low on the neck, and the eyes of the little dark woman had turned to jade-stone.

The eyes of the little dark woman were open in scornful acknowledgment, and then, in a hand's turn, they had changed and were seeking me as those of a faithful bitch will seek the eyes of her master. Her mouth was parted in the hollowed ivory of her face as one who sought a memory. A little smile crept slowly into her face to show the even rows of cutting teeth, and then she had swung the sweetness of her tiny pointed jaw away from me with the gesture I know so well, seeking to clear the tanglement of her thoughts and had paused a little moment.

With that, as her companion let something slide out from between his thin lips as he laughed, she had taken the carnation from her breast and had carefully laid it in a niche in the corner pillar, as one will lay an offering, but without even a glance at me, and so had disappeared.

I stood there looking at the empty arch and then had moved over to take up the carnation from its grey niche. It was heavy as blood and scented of musk and honey.

• • • • •

But Lupus, twisted, sardonic, stood under my lee, mouthing at me as was his way, and his milky blinded eye quivered in the way that it had when he was angered.

"By Apollo! and what may that mean? What is that woman to you, you kilted Celtic spawn? Do you know who she is and what you have done?" And then, with increasing dismay: "Do you know who *he* is?"

He paused for a moment, and I thought he would choke as he added:

"That is Clistris, who, unless these eyes of mine lie, you now have made your enemy . . . and indeed you had better have offended Cæsar himself."

I stood silent, with the hot blood working up under a skin that still glistened like white velvet from the exercises and the red hair of me flaming on my head. I do not doubt that my face went as white as my skin, waiting the crimson surge that would run across it like to an angry woman.

"You that I have trained for the sand—blood of my blood and soul of my soul. You that I have taught every trick of our trade—you, and only you—you that were more than my son. And now you go a-wenching. And what a wench!"

But with that I marched across to where my pipes lay, the bagpipes that were with me as I suppose when I was taken in the Roman net, the darling pipes of Ireland. And on the moment, I put them to my lips to let out a preliminary blast of defiance to awaken the bats hanging in the old tower that stood near to us and to turn the stomachs of the gladiators, who would rather face the cutting sword than my pipes. For these Romans, as it seemed to me, had no ear for music—an uncultivated pack!

And then I had raised such a skirl of love and death as would have done the heart of MacNessa, my music master, good to hear, had he been there instead of in Ireland, the gods alone know how many thousand leagues away, but more than "three pucks of a hurley" and be sure of that. So I marched up and down, playing to my great content, whilst Lupus frothed about me like the raging waters that boil about Innishark, that doesn't be heeding them at all, at all :

"Gods ! don't you know who she is ?" he was asking in the intervals of my belchings, "she that is the Cæsar's adopted daughter and, as they say" (he looked about him even in that moment of blind rage) "his lover. For that is the lady Decia, or Deeshie, the name she gave herself when they dragged her, a nine-year-old, out of the galley of her father, the Viper, the king of the Pirates of the Islands, after they had taken him at the sea-fight at Cosevra, that time when the Roman triremes let him escape and the Roman admiral drowned himself. Don't they say she is the daughter of a mermaid and that she has a web between her toes—and who can doubt it when you look at her green eyes, the colour of sea-water, and the red of the seaweed in the black of her hair, and the great green stone on her hand, with which it is said Lady out of the Sea, as they call her, works her spells ? A sea witch I tell you.

"And if she have a lover, it will be her own adopted father, Nero himself, for, be sure, she cannot love as common mortals do." And now, Lupus was forgetting anger in curiosity, for he continued, almost to himself : "And yet there are those who say that she, who looks like a wild thing caught in a net and for all that she is not much bigger than a sea-maiden, is the only thing

living of which Cæsar is afraid and that the scar on his cheek was deep-bitten by her when he tried to make love to her . . . he thinks she has magic . . .

"But what is that to us?" he broke off, the sullen fury in him growing again, as he watched me, standing there silent, for I had finished tickling the pipes. "You know that when they brought you captive from Hibernia and took you out of the boat in which you had ventured far from the coasts of your native island, and you, the tallest man in Rome with that fiery mane of yours and your kilts and your war pipes, throwing your Irish gods in the teeth of the great ones and driving us mad with your music, and when they destined you for the arena and the Games—I told you that I would make you the greatest fighting man the Games had ever known. But only if you followed the Triple Law: 'Contenance: abstinence: penance:' helped by the scale, the water-clock, and the tape. Contenance from women: abstinence from wine: and the penance of hard exercise. The scale for your weight: the water-clock for your speed: and the tape for your form. But, above all, continence.

"For it is the women—always the women. The women with their secret ways and their messengers. There was the lady Thora herself, that big bold blonde, that looks like a blood horse, sending her messengers day after day to you and I intercepting them. *She* would have got you had it not been for me, Lupus. And now comes this other woman. 'Sea witch' did I say? 'Sea-bitch' I should have said. Oh! to the Shades with all women!" It burst from him uncontrollably.

"Have you broken your triple vow to me, Lupus, you

cunning red hound of Éirinn ? Have you known that woman who, for all the frozen chastity of which people speak, may be the cold-fire that chills first and then burns, and she within that palace of vipers up there, a place where strange lusts breed in death ? Have you known her, I say ? ”

But I stood there without answer. And now the blood was bursting to get out from my veins, with my brain under the fillet of dull silver that, for convenience of fence, bound my long hair level to my nape, cold as the snows of Olympus as was my way when I was angry. I could feel it chill at the nape of the neck, just where the spine meets the skull, and could feel the cold seep upwards.

Old Lupus, seeing me still silent, suddenly changed. He was the crafty, soft-spoken Lupus once more—the Greek.

“ Because, little brother, that men call the Little Red Shadow, it was the dancing girls that stole the vital force from Lestra, the Gaul, about whom they still speak in Rome. He was king of the arena until a little fly-by-night no higher than his waist placed her two slender arms across his great middle—she could not have met them about him to have the riches of Mammon—and stole him from me.” And now Lupus was almost whining as he circled about me upon his K-leg as though he were searching for a place for his belly-rip and he was nearly crying, for the milk of his blinded eye gleamed moistly.

“ You would not undo me, my son ? ” he whined. “ You that have before you Tauro, the bull-man ; and then Pulta the Belearian slinger, and, if you pass them, the great Clistris, the net-thrower, and for all his

noble birth and that he fights for careless love and not for the dear life, the master of them all. You that have fought forty and six and killed them all, even the crafty Balbus of the overhead thrust.

“And who knows? If you beat Clistris Superbus, it may be that Nero will make you free of the arenas as the Cæsar that was before him made me, and so you can have your women and your wine and stretch in the sun whilst black slaves rub that great white body of yours—eh, Shadow of Cuchullin?” And he looked at me craftily as he rubbed one gnarled hand over the hilt of the blunted practice sword.

As for me, I looked back at him scornfully enough, although I loved the man in my own way. And then I let him have it:

“Is it that I am a swine that I should want pairing and concupiscence and wine and sun-sloth? Is it that I am one of the ease-loving Romans who work to give roads and bridges to the Barbarians and then die of fat and disease after their Triumphs? And I, son of Éirinn, tell you that man does not live by roads and bridges alone, not even by bread and wine—but how should you know that, you cripple? Am I a Roman, high-stomached and prideful with shaven forearm and filthy lusts and spatula to make me vomit like a pig so as to make empty belly for more food? Cæsar’s legions caught me, but they could not tame me—they set the trap and caged me, but they cannot make me sing their songs. I am an Irishman, and, by the gods of Éirinn, proud of it! and there is this thing set in my blood and in the blood of all my countrymen—that we cannot be tamed nor can you ever be sure of us.

“Was it not I who fought the great Cuchullin, the

Champion of Ireland, that they said was the first Cuchullin himself, re-born, from the rising of the sun to the going down, to be beaten by the little champion dark man only because he dared not be beaten and live? And was it not upon me that he had to use 'the-under-and-over' and so show to Éirinn the last of his hidden tricks with the magic in it? And is it not better to be beaten by Cuchullin, the little dark man and the greatest fighting man in Ireland—that is, the greatest fighting man in the whole world, than to beat Tauro and Pulta and Clistris themselves and all?"

For, indeed, it may as well come out now as later, and the gods knew that it was not that I would boast to such poor cripple of gladiator, but my name was Cuchullin's Shadow ever since that day at the Aonach Tailteann, the Games that first were held "3,333 years of the age of the world," when in order to stop me and he at his last, he showed to Ireland the last and greatest of his tricks, never, until then, shown to living man. And all this was under the shadow of Tara of the Kings, "the Gate of the North," of which the "Annals" wrote:

*Three things never to be forgotten:*

*Tailteann, Tara, and Aodh MacAinmhiredéach.*

But as for the Romans, they put the name on me of the Little Red Shadow, because of my hair, which was redder than that of Caolte's himself, and in game at my stature.

"And as for your gods," I flung at him, "what are they but poor imitations of gods? Where was Venus and Apollo and Neptune when Brigid and Lugh and Mannanaun were? . . ."

"For the body of Christ!" and now Lupus had gone grey under the skin as he looked about him, "hold that long tongue of yours. Is it that you want to give greeting to the lions in the sand like those white Christians? For the body of Christ!" And in his agitation, old Lupus used the Christian oath.

"And I will not be quiet or hold my long tongue," I replied. "I was a man when you were a monkey, and my gods were as strong as those same lions when yours were in swaddling clothes," For of course I knew that all gods existed besides my own, not being an ignorant boy, but I also knew that mine were the strongest. "Was it not Brigid that let me put the sword through Paulus's heart and helped me when I slipped in the bloody sand against the Seythian? And was it not old Mannanaun, god of the Seven Seas of Ireland, that saved me from Testus and he about to drive his fork into my belly? . . . You and your gods!" Oh, believe me, I had him frightened.

"I don't know about that," said old Lupus, crafty again. "Maybe it was and maybe it wasn't. Maybe it was that lithe body of yours that can turn on itself like a serpent and wriggled from under the fork. Who am I that should say that? Am I soothsayer or priest? Maybe the priests themselves are not so sure as they pretend to be with their guts and their sooths. Maybe, even, the White Christ is the King of them all . . ."

But he had stopped as he caught my smile, for I rarely smiled though I often boasted.

"I didn't mean that, little Red Shadow," he said, clasping his hands and dropping his sword. And now he was white to the lips and the scar from mouth to cheek-bone throbbed.

"You needn't fear me, Lupus," I said, laughing at him. "I will not have you thrown to the lions . . ." and I boasted, for I loved to boast. "But one thing I will tell you—I have never known woman, but the day will come when that girl who looked at me in the gateway shall lie in these long arms and shall come to me—for I will not go to her or to any bitch that was ever whelped. And what is more," said I, my imagination taking the bit in its teeth, "I'll put her by my side on top of the empire of the world." For, as I hope for heaven, it was in that white-hotted moment the craziest idea that ever ran tow-headed through the brain of a man came to me.

Though how all this was to be, I knew no more than Lupus himself. Yet, I always boasted, and, if it comes to that, I had the way of making my boasts good.

The old gladiator stared at me.

"I don't know what to think of you . . . yet it seems to me that perhaps the gods have touched you with their finger . . . that . . ." and he said it slowly, "or that you are a very great fool."

"In my island," I said, "'tis a saying we have that a fool and a madman hold all the wisdom of the world," and so left him standing there to puzzle it out with his face wrinkled like the face of a mummy. *dead body*

• • • • •

But indeed there was one thing I had never told old Lupus, for I knew how to keep my tongue well back in the throat in the Celtic way. I did not tell him how I hated the arena and the noble art of swordmanship prostituted to display before that glaucous-faced Nero, with his face of a pig on a dish, trimmed by its laurel

wreath as though for the table. I did not tell him how I had the black heart of contempt for all those screaming thousands of pudding-faced Romans who took their joy in the agonies of others who dared what they did not dare, and who, drunk on the blood-draught, howled for spectacle and lived upon fear and agony. Terror-poisoned hordes.

How often in the circus and the amphitheatre have I wished that the lions and tigers could have leaped the barriers to get amongst that shouting mass so that they might gorge their fill, to vomit and to gorge again!

None of this did I tell either old Lupus or anyone else, any more than I told them of that plan for the bid for an empire which was now growing in my red head as snakes are hatched in the mouths of cockatrices, for to do so meant the one thing in Rome that was the cure for all ills—ingenious death. Oh! but it was I that wasn't ahide in the rock when the gods served out the cunning.

Only two days ago I saw in Trafalgar Square in this city of London which is the home of my present life and where I am writing this, one hundred thousand people gathered into stifling pack and heard once more the cry of the pack as the little marionettes on the plinth urged them on—and marvelled again that men of superior clay, made in the likeness of God, could pander to the mob with its heart of hate and feet of clay. Had they stood, as I have done, in the burning suns of the Circus and seen the carrion mob scream for blood, they would know the measure of mob-plaudit and of the thing upon which the demagogue of to-day lives as did his predecessors of two thousand years ago—the thing called popularity.

Acclaimed to-day ; maimed to-morrow—that is popularity and that is that *vox populi, vox Dei* of which we spoke in old Rome even as we speak to-day.

Nor did I tell Lupus of the way I had of thinking of those white Christians, braver than any of us. For we died in hot blood and the heat of battle, but they died with the blood cool and unresistant. Poor weak creatures as it seemed to me, a lover of my pagan gods, dreamers and invertebrates. Yet who was I, that had my own dreams, to hold them up to scorn for dreaming, and when they looked into the maw of the lion, or calmly faced the ravening tiger, who was I that should call them without courage ?

And yet it did go against something in me to see them struck down in the sand without a fight. I, I would have fought with bare hand even as I had broken the neck of the Spanish bull when it would have gored me—yet that, of course, I did but for fun and because in Éirinn it was an old trick when time was young.

• • • • •

All this ran through my mind as I stood there listening to the rumble and growl of old Lupus, whose next words I caught as I came out of my dream, for I had always the way of dreaming, sometimes it might be about Ireland and the old days when I ran, slank-legged as a young horse, with the red head flaming on me, on the side of the Mountain of the Diamond.

“ They are but small things, all those others of whom we have spoken, when we talk of Clistris. For Clistris is more deadly than any hooded cobra brought out of the Orient ; he is quick as death and cunning as life.

Nor do I see how you can kill him. But all that is on the knees of the gods and so I speak not of it."

And he had reason. For this man Clistris was of his own kind. He was a separate sort of man, was "Clistris the Cat" as men called him in Rome.

The noble Clistris was a law unto himself. In all Rome, where men dived high and lived low, there was no man who lived more dangerously than Clistris, who, tired of the dice, now played with death in the arena. For it was open to any man who wanted and could get Cæsar's permission, to go down into the sand there to fight with men and beasts. It was for some the only pang in life untasted—and so they put the bitter draught to their lips and drank.

Now this young nobleman looked as soft as a girl, but for all his softness and the gentle cooing way he had of speaking, when he did speak, which was but seldom, there was no more deadly thing in the Rome of that day. For the art of the net was his, and from that day, six years before, when he had entered the lists against a young swordsman out of the School of Lupus, he had sent some of the most dangerous fighting men in the arena out upon "the road to glory," as we men of Éirinn called death, and, indeed, only once or twice had his own skin been broken. For he was not as other young nobles of his kind who, for the sake of glory or to win the favour of women, would venture once into the arena and if they were successful in their death-dicing, would leave it for ever and so live on the reputation they had snatched on a summer's afternoon.

Not so, Clistris, who at each of the Games went down into the hot sand to expose his body of shining ivory to the thrust of sword or trident and who said, in that

sleepy way of his, as though he were speaking behind his teeth, the saying by which he was known: "I dice with Death that Death may pass me by." And I, once Shadow of Cuchullin, now a man of the twentieth century, say also: "Live dangerously and Death will not turn his scythe to sweep you down. Live carefully, and he will follow you as sleuthy as a wolf." But the White Christ was reputed in the Rome of my day to have said the same thing: "He that saveth his life shall lose it . . ." and a man named Nietszche gave out the same hard saying in our day. For nothing changes.

This young Clistris had a rare vital force that ran like quicksilver through his nerves and that made action tread upon the heels of thought, but never so as to trip it up. He was one of those athletes the gods, to delight the eyes of men and as foretaste of what men may one day be, send every thousand years or so to earth, the athlete in which brain and brawn run together in that perfection of movement which marks the supreme artist. (There was the wrestler Bulbus, a giant of a man who for twenty years they said had defeated every opponent, and who seemed to be one of these god-given men, but it was his huge bulk—he weighed as much as a young ox—that won him his victories—brute force and not skill or subtlety, so that I speak not of him.)

The brain-thought of the high born Clistris, as I have said, was as the levin flash—movement and thought together, and he was as pregnant of trick as a monkey. He had learned all that his teachers in the gladiatorial schools could give to him and then had gone on to make a technique of his own, matchless and strange as the man himself.

Instead of using the right arm to throw the net, as was the way of the *retiarii*, he used the left, and he would at times, to trouble his man, throw with the left foot foremost instead of the opposite or right. It was Clistris who had mastered the rhythm of the feet, so that they never tripped each other up, much as I have seen it in the modern prize ring, for he was the father of "foot-work." When he moved to left or right, he always moved in such a way that his legs never crossed, and when he had made his throw and missed, he would with the same movement gather his net to him and be off with the speed of the wind before his opponent could get into him.

He was matchless, was Clistris, Clistris Superbus they sometimes called him.

He was as full of vices as a Nubian dancing girl. He painted his naked face and dyed his hair with henna much as the young women do to-day, and he shaved the hair from his forearms—but he trained faithfully. His muscles ran in long smooth ripples like my own, and if I looked a girl, as they sometimes mocked, because of those same smooth muscles as because of my long hair and plaited kilt, then he looked a child. But there was one thing in this man which contradicted all the rest—his eyes.

And, indeed, I have always hated those burned eyes of brown in every life that I have lived. And his head, the thin head with that strange bulge at the back, I hated too, for, like all my countrymen, I have always believed that the gods hold the face as mirror to the nature within.

And yet, in his way, he was a terribly handsome man, and of height, the middle.

This was the man whom I knew in my bones, the place where we know all the greater things, I was one day to fight, and if I won, to fight on and on until released by the steel or by Cæsar's decree that I should be freed of the arena—the gladiator's poor slender cord on life. And if Nero did this, he would do so not for love of me but to make the toothéd death sharper to the fighting man and because it sometimes tickled the fickle palate of the mob to indulge in a flippant mercy.

Yet was there one other way out—the way of which I was already beginning to whisper to myself, but a way so strange and regal and so perilous, that there might be those who would call it a blind alley with death and torture sitting at the end of it. It is not here, however, that I will speak of this thing—but wait a-while now!

And this man Clistris was cruel. They called him “The Cat” because of the way that he played with his defeated opponents in the sand. He had a dozen tricks to disable a man without killing or stopping him. Sometimes it would be a thrust of his trident through the arm-muscle and sometimes a slant across the loins so as to cripple the legs whilst leaving the torso fit to fight on. And as men will fight to the last for the thing of which they are often most tired, life, so his victims, crippled, would fight on to the great delight of the mob.

And with it all, his tongue was as sharp as his trident, and as he thrust he taunted, until the lagging wretch before him would pray for easement with starting eyeball and panting breath. Nor, in the long last, did he ever spare his man but always gave the death-stroke so that the duel could not go to the verdict of the howling crowd.

Nor could I forgive this man Clistris this. For it

seemed to me more ugly for a man to fight in cold blood without the need than in the hot and for life, as was always the way of us Irishmen. For if I had refused to fight, an arm's length of stabbing sword or the tortures that awaited the coward gladiator would have been my portion. Yet even then I could only fight with clear conscience when the blood had burst to my head after the first exchanges. And also, as I have said, I knew, as men do know such things, that one day I would meet this man in the arena if I passed the Scylla and Charybdis of Tauro and Pulta.

## THE SECOND MEMORY

### THE - GAMES

THE Games were about to open in the Ides of May in the Circus Maximus before the nearly half a million of people which the colossal structure could contain. They were to be dedicated to the Lady Decia herself by the order of Nero, who, it was rumoured, was about to declare her the incarnation of a goddess and who was to be present on his great throne under the purple canopy in the *podium*, for so it was called as I remember it. Nero, that monster-genius as he was—he who drew from the strings of his lyre and his imagination melting poetry and exquisite sound; that emperor who could be at once great jurist and simpering woolhead, shrewd judge of men and gibbering buffoon—an ape haunted by angels.

All the Roman nobles and their wives were to be present, and there was to be chariot racing, and a new game that one of the Roman generals had brought from Britain when he took his Triumph—bull baiting by dogs. There was to be walking on the tight-rope by elephants to tickle the fancy of the mob and there was to be some very pretty wild beast fighting between bulls and tigers and between old One-Horn, a famous rogue-rhinoceros of the arena, and a triple-horned white

female rhinoceros with her young one first tormented before her eyes by One-Horn. There were tigers brought from the jungles of Hind and Lions gathered out of the Nubian deserts—half a thousand of them. You could hear their roars shuddering through the nights as they starved in the dens underneath the arena, where they made ready for their glut of Christian flesh.

For the Christians, two thousand of whom had been caught praying in the catacombs and collected together little by little for the occasion, were to be the tit-bit of the Games, which were to be on a vaster scale than any that had preceded them. A couple of thousand of them and half a hundred lions and tigers let loose amongst them to take their fill. What a sight for the gods and for the shouting thousands!

And I, of whose sword-play men were beginning to think, was also to do my share to entertain the mob that thought they ruled Rome but did not. For even then as now, and as it will ever be, it was the few who ruled, but it was through the vanity and greed of the mob and by pandering to the mob-hunger that they ruled. Even to-day in this twentieth century as I sometimes watch the so-called great ones cunningly spreading their nets for the mobs and for one another, I think of old Rome where that prince of pimps, the politician, even as now, learned the secret of mob-rule—flattery; entertainment; and never going a hand's breadth beyond the noses of the mass.

The Circus Maximus, as my earth-memory reaches back, was usually reserved to chariot racing and mock combats and to athletic displays of boxing and wrestling, fierce enough at times and in their own way, for I, with my own eyes, have seen a man's brains beaten

out of the shell of his skull by a blow of the *cæstus*. But as this Circus Maximus was the only building in Rome, or, for that matter, the world, that could house hundreds of thousands of men and women at one time, and as the pot-bellied mob has always craved its full measure of blood, Nero, to appease the people who often hated him, would sometimes throw to them Christian flesh or, for their entertainment, pit the greater gladiators against one another or against wild beasts in this same Circus instead of the Amphitheatre, which was usually reserved to man-fights.

These special combats of gladiators were always single-combats, for the fight for life of man against man was in old Rome as it still is to-day the supreme morsel—bitter-sweet to the taste. But in the other arenas, the gladiators usually fought in pairs, and I know that I have seen a hundred of them fight together at one time in some amphitheatre or other.

In the present Games, I was to fight Tauro, the bull-man, the first of the champions of rank against whom I, a stripling still in my twenty-third year, was to be pitted, and if I survived him Pulta. It was to be the last of the single-combats, this combat of youth and maturity, and therefore a rare bit. For Rome, as I said, was beginning to speak of the young champion whom they called "The Shadow," who had sent forty and six fighting men to the gods. Even the great Nero himself, it was rumoured, had spoken of me.

But Tauro was another sort of champion. He was now on the threshold of his fortieth year, of a supreme craft and of an endurance of which men spoke with wondering breath. There were, however, those who hinted that he was a little slower in the uptake than he

used to be, much as to-day when a champion boxer has been for many years enthroned, there are those who will whisper about him whether the whisperings be true or not. But Lupus, who had spied on him at practice with the blunted sword, was not of this opinion, and the word of Lupus on the art of killing was worth all the talk of Rome, where rumour had lying mouth and flying feet.

"He is sudden on the turn, little Shadow," he had said. "Cunning as the snake with the jointed neck and, for all his bulk, with a lightning guard and a backward flick with death in the tail of it. And this is to be his last fight, for if he beats you he is to be free of the arena for life. That will double-edge his wits; and if it had been my will, you should not have gone against him for a couple of years more, when his speed had waned and your strength and cunning increased. But Nero has willed it.

"Our only chance is to meet guile with guile. And now you are going to have an accident in practice, my son, and it is old Lupus who will give it to you. A real accident, mark you, with real blood and a severing of flesh."

I stared at him in the school of the gladiators, where in the shadows massive forms were being rubbed and beaten and scraped with the strigils that bore the names of the owners and with that scent of oil and sweat which came back to me the other night when I saw the coloured boxing champion of the world knock out his white opponent. Faugh! And yet the scent seemed good to me. So do old lusts creep about our hearts and darken our understandings.

I stared at him in silence, as was my way. I knew that the nobles and senators of Rome had wagered heavily upon the outcome of this fight between Tauro and

myself and I scented a trick. A double trick—to-day in the boxing ring they call it “double-crossing,” a trick as old as civilization. And it seemed to me that old serpent Lupus, bribed by some rich nobleman with estates wagered upon the fight to the last denarius, was going to pretend that he would not hurt me really and then “by accident on purpose” as we had it in Ireland, would disable me for my battle with Tauro sufficient to give the bull-man the advantage.

For I was suspicious as any Celt of the Western country of eye of deep blue and hair of sudden red might be. I would have suspected my own mother and she asleep under the shadow of the Diamond Mountain had she come to me with such a proposal—nor would she, the wisest and sleuthiest of women, have blamed me for it!

Then I looked into the blinded eye of the old gladiator, that eye which seemed, for all his fierceness, milky with a human kindliness, and knew that I had wronged him. But I did not tell him what I had thought, for what is the good of stirring sleeping tigers? and they Greck tigers at that!

When we fought in the gymnasium, we did so usually in full armour so as to become accustomed to bear the helm with its eye-slits and the mailed sleeve and the greaves and heavy shield, not to mention the stabbing sword, with its cross hilt and copper wire bound about it. But cunning Lupus, with an eye for my peculiar strength and agility, had invented for me a special armour with a light helm made of toughened copper and with breathing holes—a shrewd advantage. The armlet of my sword arm, the left, for I was a left-handed fighter, was of plaited brass wire, my legs being protected by the thinnest of copper greaves.

But it was in the manufacture of the sword and shield that he showed his chiefest ingenuity. For the shield, instead of the ordinary cumbrous affair of bull's hide and wood, or wood covered by metal, was built of a framework of thin hickory covered with pigskin, toughened by the process which I had shown him and which I had learned from the great Cuchullin himself. Upon this, again, was laid a thin plaited wire.

All these things, save the nostrilled helm, were hatched in the nest of my own red head, and all of them, and especially the idea of the shield, he had fought at first. When, however, I told him that we fought light in Ireland and when he found that my agility and skill more than made up for the lack of sheer substance in my armour, he let my way go with me—even to the long stabbing sword, more than two hands longer, as it was slanker, than that of any other fighter in Rome, which also was the child of my own brain.

For, indeed, in these contests there were no rules for weight and length, save only for the limits of the body armour.

There was one other little thing, also of my own devising, which I hoped might one day hold me this side of the thin line that separates life from death in the sand, although I filched the idea from one of the sandy-headed northern warriors of my native country. For indeed I have no need to claim credit for things born not of my own brain, I have enough of my own.

It was sometimes the fashion in Rome for the gladiators to have their shields bent over a trifle at the corners. On the principle that use should always accompany the beauty which is its mother, I had carried the bending of the right-hand top corner of my shield a little further

and in the bend had made a notch, turning it into a sort of barbed fish-hook. Now the purpose of this will later be seen, but here I may pass the word that nets and fish-hooks go together, and leave it at that.

“Watch his overhead lunge, little brother,” Lupus had warned me again and again, “and use not the side slash unless you are *in extremis*, for that must be kept for Clistris, if you live so long. None must know that you know it and brought it from Hibernia. So-so ; so-so. Guard to the right ; now the thrust ; and now the backward feint, and then the half turn and outside his shield—and so in the short ribs with the point that striketh like the coiled cobra. Boy ! how much you can teach even me, old Lupus, with that point. Had I only known the way of it, I would not to-day drag my carcase about upon a K-leg.”

Cut and thrust and stop—stop and cut and thrust. So it went on day by day in the school of Lupus and the air full of shining serpents as my blade ran in and out and old Lupus himself slain from once to half a score of times a day, had our swords been edged and it had been mortal combat.

## THE THIRD MEMORY

### OUTSIDE THE ARENA

As I stood outside the arena with my slender rectangular shield leaning against the wall and balanced my sword in my hand as I made my passes in the shadow-play with which I always loosened my muscles and fine-edged my eye before a fight, there came to me the shuddering of the wild beasts in their cages of bricks and mortar built deep beneath the arena.

Then, from within, the answering roar of the throngs who delighted in answer for answer. First the great deep bass of the black-maned Nubians, and then the answering howl from the mob above.

I felt the chill of fear which always came to me before I fought, for why should I, the Shadow of Cuchullin, be backward to confess to fear, I, that except for the little dark Champion himself was maybe the bravest man that ever took a sword in his hand in Éirinn ?

My sword arm, my left—for, as I said, I was one of the *cithogue* men as we called them in Ireland—was carefully bound with a white lint which showed from underneath the plaited wire arm guard, with which Lupus had replaced the customary scale mail, for the old Greek had scratched me as he had promised as a lure to Tauro—to lull him to carelessness.

In this flickering memory of mine of past lives, there comes to me the thought that lions played about my feet as I stood there, waiting, but of this I cannot be sure nor can I say why lions should find themselves there outside their cages set deep underneath the circus. Many times, as I tell my story, it may be that seeming discrepancies steal in—but I must say the truth as it is in me even though it may sometimes appear the untruth. For all these things I have myself seen, even though sometimes “through a glass, darkly,” as a Christian leader once put it, and they are limned more clearly upon my mind than anything I have lived in my present life in this London of to-day.

Then the lions had disappeared and, as I stood there, towering high above the dancing girls who came to make fun with me as was their wont, watching them out of the corners of my blue eyes as they pretended to try the edge of my sword and shuddering, for the ways of women have not changed, I wondered with more of doubt than I cared to own to myself, what this white body of mine would be like within the hour.

“What a lovely girl!” one of the dancing girls had said, mocking me. “Look at his white skin and soft cheek and his green petticoat. And, by Bacchus! he blushes. Oh! but he must be a girl.”

By the “green petticoat,” she meant my kilt which I always wore, and the Romans themselves were accustomed to laugh at the fashion and colour of my kilt, not because of the kilt itself, which was not unlike their own garments.

“And the silver fillet about that long red hair of his and his blue eyes like blue lakes set deep in the hills,” said another of the hussies.

“And the muscles, muscled like a girl, not a man,” mocked a third. She was a red-haired vixen who, as we said in old Rome, had “favoured” me, but I would not, being pledged to myself and the lady Deeshie, and for this continence hated me, as women will, because it was continence against her and not against others; for women were the same then as they are to-day. “What a dainty white meat for a tiger’s gullet!” she railed. “They prefer women’s flesh, Saba the Parthian, the keeper of the tigers, told me. A pretty girl!” And she flaunted her hips in the tawny sunlight to scorn me.

Indeed, she was right. For my arms, as I looked at the long rippling muscles that played under the blue-veined skin, did look like the arms of a girl. But it was just those long ripples which had beaten for speed the short stocky muscles of my forty-six opponents. For the long-muscled man is ever the master of the short-muscled with its slower reaction. And so I laughed at her sullenly enough.

“Oh! look at him,” came the saucy red minx again, and she a little sprat no higher than my elbow. “Look at the thunders of Olympus on his brows and he blushing again like a great girl. Girl!” she mocked.

But that was more than I could bear, or at least I pretended it was more, for I was flattered at their fun, and indeed it was never the hard thing to flatter the Red Shadow. And when she found herself held out at arm’s length and kicking high over her fellows like a fish at the end of a fisherman’s line, she sang another tune.

“Put me down, you great bear!” she shrieked.  
“Put me down!”

“Kick, you devil, kick!” was my reply.

With that, the little red devil had sunk her small white fangs into my hand to send the blood spurting forth and to leave me in a pretty mess—but all a fortunate chance as will be shown in its own place.

These girls loved to tease me, and, as it comes to me to-day, because I would not lightly sport with them or use them as did my fellow-gladiators, they loved me in their own way—yet, also, despising me because I would not take them, as is a woman's way. For I had the beauty of my race, and, there is no use denying it, the women were always cracked after me and my red head that set them a-fire. Nor was it coldness, but pride that kept me from their soft bodies.

All, that is, save that red-haired vixen whom they said was Tauro's mistress when he was not in training and who hated me because I would not let her love me. For Tauro was one of those dangerous fighters who never risked condition for lust. I knew she would report to my opponent that my sword arm was injured, and now my hand. But the bite was not so deep as it seemed. Yet had I made much of it and had dropped the girl as though with a bad hurt, for 'twas I that had the great cunning.

"A stiffening hand and Tauro's over-thrust," said the red one, laughing again. "*Salve atque vale!* little Red Shadow." And she had gone out still laughing, as I was sure, to tell Tauro of my new wound.

And now the blast of the Roman trumpets announced the approach of the procession from the Capitol, which, if my memory serves, always preceded the opening of the Games. Those who carried the gods walked in front, with, behind them, the contestants, the Roman consuls and others. As for me, I had been freed from this

attendance through a whim of the Cæsar, who wanted me for something other as will be seen.

Then, from where I stood, I could hear once more the blast of the trumpets, those trumpets the blast of which the Romans claimed, could be heard from sunrise to sunset the wide world round.

They announced the approach of Cæsar, to be followed by the plaudits of the mob as they rose in thundrous greeting. For Nero the tyrant was very popular just now because of his generosity with Christian flesh and blood and because the populace hated the followers of the gentle Jesus. Yet, indeed, this Jesus of theirs could be very fierce at times and it was said that he had once driven the money-changers from the Temple with a thonged whip. But the Christians did not speak of that, for people never will see what they don't want to see, whether pagan or Christian.

Now the gladiators were being assembled for their death-greeting. Then, in a little, I could hear the "*Ave, Cæsar! morituri te salutant.*" A foolish proceeding as I thought, yet not without a certain sad dignity. I, with Tauro and perhaps half a score of other principals, was to make my greeting separately—an honour sometimes reserved for fellows who knew how to fight—for Rome's first man-killers. And it was I who had been chosen to lead them into the arena, and in the queer way that will be seen in its own place, for when the madness came upon Nero, hell had no limits for his ingenuity.

Again I could hear from my place outside the arena the howls of the mob burst forth in the face of the blue skies above. It was the dread "*Christiani ad leones! Christiani ad leones!*" And then there was a great

silence. Even the wild beasts had ceased to roar.

I knew that silence. It was the moment of sending the Christians into the arena before unleashing the brutes from their dens. For always, when the keepers of the dens approached to await the signal for release, their charges, knowing what it meant, closed down upon their cavernous throattles as they licked their hungry jaws with lolling tongues.

Out of the silence there came a shuffling and a soft scatter of sand. Shuffle—shuffle—shuffle. Hidden though I was behind my high barrier, I could see in imagination that long train of young men and old, young women and old women, as they shuffled across the sand to their appointed stations just before the exit from the dens, a sloping tunnel which stood one third the length of the arena from its upper end, where the horse-stalls were. In my time, I can also remember a sort of canal to protect the spectators from the wild beasts, and on this canal and others, made for the occasion and flooded, water spectacles and mimic sea fights sometimes took place.

In the present instance there would also be, as I knew, a stout net run straight across the arena at the point where the long central dividing wall, or plinth, around which the chariots were wont to race, ended, so as to confine the beasts to that, the more open end, of the Circus. For as I remember that spinal wall, one end of it ran closer to the edge of the arena than the other.

The silence held, for in the presence of that awful courage even the Roman mob held tongue. And then, as I stood there, with the dancing girls gone, I heard a quavering voice singing and then the soft undertone of the others, young men and maidens and the grey-haired

ones as they joined in. And there were the soft trebles of little children.

Then the mob had given tongue. There was that hoarse screaming rage with which the crowd would lash itself into frenzy, and I could see the frothing lips and the whites of the eyeballs.

The howling had died away again and nothing more was heard than the murmured prayer of some olding who prayed to his God. The mob was waiting, waiting for "The Hymn of the Lions," which they had grown to expect as if it had been something in a theatre. It was the hymn which the Christians always sang as the lions came up out of their dens, the first three lines of each verse being sung by a leader, usually a young girl or even a child, and the last line: "Who follows in His train?" in great victorious chorus, as though they were going to victory instead of to painful death.

Oh pleasant death! oh gentle death!  
We greet thee, door of pain.  
Oh Jesu! hear my passing breath . . .

*Who follows in His train?*

We thank thee Christ, for tiger's claw  
And lion's gory mane.  
We praise thee now, for evermore . . .

*Who follows in His train?*

The pause before "Who follows in His train?" came in answering chorus, had something in it that wrung the heart—even my pagan heart.

There was another great silence and I knew that the first of the brutes would have put his head above the sand of the arena as he came up that slope from the dens beneath to blink about him in the unaccustomed sunlight like some great lazy cat. There came out of the

silence the first roar, this time from the stentor of the lions, who, in these things, always led the awful choruses of his fellows, and then the solitary snarl of a tiger. And, though you might not think it of a man with my courage, I never yet heard the bass tremble of a lion without the heart shrinking within me. (It was the same when, as a child in my present life, my mother brought me to the Zoological Gardens in London on a visit from my native Ireland. We had just entered the gates, when I felt that shudder of the great cats tremble in the air and, though I had never until that day seen a lion, knew it for what it was and shivered in the hot sun.)

The straining faces as the brutes crept on belly towards their meat. And then that first roar and plunge, the scuttle in the sand, and then the howls of the mob and the scrunching of bones—and once the cry of a little child. For the little ones could not always bear the sight of the crawling death and would cling to their mothers. But some of them would lisp their childish prayers, meeting it and never flinch from fang or claw. No wonder the gentle Jesu awakened the imagination of a world that has forgotten Him even while it pays homage.

But it is the “I” of the twentieth century who now is speaking and not the “I” of two thousand years ago, when I thought of these things not at all. For we die and learn.

## THE FOURTH MEMORY

AVE CÆSAR ! MORITURI TE SALUTANT !

I SUPPOSE I must have been crying, for old Lupus stood before me as concerned for me as a mother for her firstborn.

"So, so, little brother!" he cried. "And is it that you fear?"

"Fear?" I said. "I fear nothing save the gods—and them also I would fight if they said I feared. It is not fear, but hate. Hate of those who do these things to gentle Christian maids—hate of Tauro himself who took the maid Virginia, now dying inside that arena, and worked his foul will on her. It is he who will fear, for I will put the fear of death into him before I kill him."

"If you do, it is you who will be playing with death," said Lupus, anxiously. "They are only Christians—and what is a Christian?" And he spat. "Kill him quick ere he kills you."

"And indeed and I will not," I replied hotly. "I will make him sweat fear in the sunlight before I finish with him. And he—he can never kill me." I said it proudly enough and knew in that moment that I was invulnerable and that the gods of my fathers were pouring new courage into me, in the way that they did when I played on the

pipes. For, make no mistake, the gods are real and living, to-day as yesterday. They are our elder brothers who stand behind us lest our foot slip—and if they become our masters, why, that is our fault, we who should always keep them in their place as they keep us in ours.

But Lupus looked anxiously at my hand.

“It is a nothing,” I said, “but give me the oil that it may not stiffen.”

He massaged it in his cunning way with his broken hands, for there was no better rubber in Rome.

But now our time had come. And there I was standing side by side with big Tauro outside the Gate of Pomp, over which the emperor sat, waiting to march in and make our obeisance to him. And behind us two were half a score of other gladiators. And in my hands, with the green streamers flying from them, were my pipes—for now the secret is out.

I drew strength from the war-pipes as other men drew theirs from wine. And Nero, in his madness or his wisdom, once having heard me play upon them, had acclaimed me as a master musician after his own heart, saying that he and I had both been visited by Apollo, though himself much more than I, for this madman would be second to none in Rome, and indeed I was a little that way myself. Finding which, I had petitioned him that I might be allowed to play upon the pipes before I fought, to which he had given gracious assent—always upon the understanding that I was of baser music mould than the Great One, himself. For he was very clear and very cracked about this.

I wanted to give these base pot-bellied Romans something to remember before they went the way of flesh ;

and nothing finer could I imagine than I, myself, playing to them "The Roar of the Waters" on the great pipes and then, afterwards, going into the sand to kill the best they could send against me, the Shadow of Cuchullin. And Nero, to give him his due, seemed to be of the same mind—either that or that he wanted to spring a surprise upon the mob, which he loved to do. (Haven't I, with my own eyes, seen noble women fighting with dwarfs in one of the amphitheatres, however hard it may be for those who read it to stomach, the thing that was one of the Cæsar's surprises.)

So there was I with the hair flaming on me, standing up straight and proud as a young birch-tree, with Tauro by my side. But though I topped the giant by a full head, he was as thick about the middle as a young oak, with spreading shoulders that had power locked in them. I could not forbear to admire this figure of a man and even to regret, once more, the maiming and destruction of so much that was beautiful. There was Clistris behind—lithe as a snake with net and trident—unmatched Clistris who measured my length with an eye of fiery brown.

There was also a slinger or two, little left-handed men, quick as apes, with black pelts and low foreheads, and with jaws that ran back into the throat. These were from the Balearic Isles and able, as I knew, to hit a stretched bowstring between two spear heads at a hundred paces with their long slings and polished rounded pellets which they carried in the little wallets slung on the right side. And sometimes they would carry a spare sling between their blackened teeth.

These men were more deadly than any swordsman, for they could run like deer, were as quick as cats, and

once a pellet had found the forehead of an opponent, the place for which they mostly aimed, he died before he knew it. But their pellets were allowanced and if they failed to hit with them, they were forced to come up to the sword to die on the point, with only their naked hands and nimble legs to save them in the last desperate chance of a clutch at the open throat of the swordsman. I had seen them cling like cats to a big man and tear the throat out of him as a boy with finger and thumb will tear the heart out of an orange.

These slingers I watched carefully, because I knew that the tiniest of them, a dwarf, was the dreaded Pulta and he muscled into a bundle of twisted sinew, and I knew that one day I should have to meet him in the arena—if I were so lucky or so cunning as to kill Tauro.

We made ready to march in, two by two, and again I hated it all. To march by the side of the man you were about to kill and to greet the larded brute who looked down safely from his imperial perch—there was something about that hateful and useless. Like the Greeks, I hated the mutilation of white flesh and noble sinew, for like all men of my race I worshipped the body, and I sometimes said in jest that I must once have been a Greek. But that I did not believe, for in those far-off days I did not know that men lived many times on this earth and the memory of other lives had not awakened in me, as, sooner or later, it does in all of us humans. I was very thoughtless in those days.

And now the pipes were slung ready over my left shoulder and we heard the trumpets command silence. With that, I sent the first blast of my lungs into the pipes and rose "The Roar of the Waters," doubtless to the

dismay of the Roman citizens, none of whom had ever heard the war-pipes.

As the gate sank to the ground before us and we marched in, two by two, myself at the head with the pipes now in full blast and glory-soaring, there came to my nostrils such a stench of cat and blood as nearly sent my stomach back on me. The hot sun struck down on the sand despite the great sails that were spent over the centre of the arena and caught from the spinal plinth back and up to the high copings of the exterior walls. On the plinth there were still grouped the young Roman nobles who were accustomed to urge on their charioteers as they rushed past the two end colossi, four horses abreast, to the smash of whip and howl of mob.

As the stench of the sand rose to my nostrils and the glare of the sun struck vaporous upon my eyes, there came to me as in a bloody mist, sweating faces that lifted themselves tier on tier around that vast ellipse of blood and agony. There they ran, from the highest tiers up near the sky-line where the lowest of the rabble unshaded, bleached under the hot sun and let their foul stinkings rise to high heaven, down to where the great purple canopy reared itself just over the Gate of Pomp to show the sodden globe of the imperial face.

As we made our circling with the pipes skirling, I could see, dimly, the master of Rome and of us all with the vermillion smeared on his face sprinkled with gold dust. (When I was in Paris in this present life, I found that women were doing as imperial Cæsar had done a couple of thousand years before in old Rome. Love and death and painted faces are still the same.)

As we strode along, with the mob held for once in a

way to amazed silence at the pipes, the awful stench of flesh came again to my nostrils to nauseate, so that I had to take the mouthpiece from my lips for a moment. Tauro, observing it, said to me without turning his helmeted head: "You do not like the scent of Christian flesh, Red Shadow. But within the hour, it will be your own white flesh that will stink in the sand, when I win my freedom from the arena." But he only said it to shake me in my centres as was the way of his kind, for he did not hate me, and we fighting men fought without hate—sometimes almost without feeling.

And he did shake me, for I was but a youth, and he the veteran of a hundred bloody encounters, and who would I be that I should be ashamed to own to it—I that was the spunkiest boy that ever locked a shield on his arm—and now it is not myself that I am quoting but Rome.

We were passing, as he spoke, the broken body of a young girl that the men with the hooks had not yet struck their irons into to drag into the place of the dead, and as we went by I could see that it was the Christian maid Virginia, who had led the singing. Her face was set white in death, unharmed and fair, but across the naked rounded belly there was a terrible gash where the tiger's claw had done its work.

"And, little man from Hibernia," went on Tauro, "I enjoyed that white Christian flesh before it was thrown to the lions and the scent and savour of it was as good to me as to the tiger that drove his sharp talons into her."

But this, again, he said but to break my nerve and because he had got to learn, perhaps through his red-haired vixen, that I hated the torture of the

Christians, for Rome was all ears. But no man in Rome could understand it.

He was a very brute, was Tauro, only that we did not use that word in Rome—for paganism knew no pity. Its heartlessness and its love for beauty, as it comes to me to-day across the gulf of the years, were the essential differences between Paganism and Christianity. The followers of the White Christ took from the world its sense of beauty, but I, who still have a pagan heart, can say that it took also some of its cruelty.

To all these things from Tauro, I, marching steadily by his side and without moving my unhelmed head, for it was death to speak in the presence of Cæsar, said :

“For that, Tauro, you shall not die quickly this day, but slow. And ere you go to the shades, you shall taste the bitter black draught of defeat and disgrace and the cup of your freedom shall be dashed from your lips.”

But now we were nearing the Cæsar and even Tauro dared not reply, but, to my secret satisfaction, the stiffening head told its own story. As for me, I had put the pipes to my lips once more and was letting “Modderederoo,” the oldest tune in the world, roll out in defiance.

It was at this moment that I saw her.

The lady Deeshie was sitting by the side of Nero, dressed in the bronze and green which she so often wore. The young head was set high on the fair neck and the green oblique eye stared proudly downwards, but without a turn of the neck so much as by a hair. She was very lovely in her own vibrant, inheld way, with the tawn showing itself in the black of her hair and the tiny pointed chin with the aspid jaw.

She was looking at me—and now “Modderederoo”

had become a pæan of praise and glory, and I was blowing heaven and hell through the pipes and the stars dancing in their places and the great sun reeling in the sky.

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And now the trumpets had gone for the last three duels of the Games. That between Pulta, the slinger, and a Persian archer. Then, the fight between Clistris, the net-thrower, noble and amateur, and a young swordsman out of Gaul who had already made his reputation by defeating old Menelaus, a Greek, battle-scarred and with the sleuth of his people. But his craft had not availed him against youth, for youth will be served however much age may call cunning to its aid, and Menelaus had finally lost his shield arm severed at the shoulder, though, indeed, the people spared his life. And the final between Tauro and myself, of which I will speak in its own place.

After Pulta had slung his pellet into his adversary's throat as easily as an urchin drops a stone into a pool, Clistris and the young Gaulish swordsman entered the sand to do battle.

I watched the *retiarius* more closely than any man there, for on my observation my life might hang. Yet I knew, even as I watched the net-thrower feinting slenderly with his leaded net and the flash of his trident with its razor-barbs, that for me he would keep back one of those tricks which all gladiators held in last reserve—for the day which must come to all sons of flesh, when they find Old Man Death standing behind the arm of their opponent.

Men said already that Clistris meant to kill me. It

was not, perhaps, that he hated me, although I thought I could see dislike haunting that brown fiery eye the day the lady Deeshie placed the carnation in the niche of the school: but as it comes to me, I do not think the noble Clistris knew how to hate any more than how to love. It was simply that, in his cold way, he was set upon defeating the man who was the tallest man and maybe the best swordsman in Rome. That was all.

For Clistris, as his swarth body moved back and forth in the Roman sunlight knew that I would be watching, and knowing it, would even pretend weaknesses he did not have and would hide the trick with which he would hope to win my life in the face of the Cæsar.

His young opponent moved about him, watching the flash of the dreaded net. Again, and yet again, as they trod the steaming sand in that high silence, he avoided the swinging death by a stride, jumping now to the left and now to the right, and ever, after him, came the crafty Clistris, his eyes set piercingly upon him as a cat will look at a bird. And now Clistris seemed to be tiring, and the young Gaul, confident, began to press him and even scratched him lightly in the left throwing-shoulder, for this man Clistris, like myself, and as I think I have said, was a left-handed fighter.

But I, watching from the ringside, could have sworn that the netsman had dropped his guard arm for the moment, as though tired, and pretending. And then, as the white body of the young Gaul rushed inside the net-guard to finish his opponent, Clistris who was the inventor of this same net-guard, had sprung backwards and sideways and had given his trident its length into the side of the Gaul, until the red blood spurted out, and with it the life,

The crowd shouted as was its way, " Clistris ! oh Clistris ! " The corpse men struck their hooks into the limp white body, only a moment before pulsing with life, to drag it out, and the screaming of the mob had died away as the trumpets rang out for the final struggle of the day, that between Tauro and myself.

Well, they were going to see something worth seeing, if it comes to that.

## THE FIFTH MEMORY

### I FIGHT WITH TAURO

OUR Roman spectacles sometimes concluded with a general *mêlée* between hundreds of gladiators, in which they fought together until only one man was left ; for Rome was pitiless and at the end of the day, bloated on blood, none were spared. Yet we gladiators died easily enough. We bore no grudge against the comrades who killed us, knowing they did it in self-defence and knowing also that we would kill as ruthlessly were we victorious.

It is strange for a man who carries memory from one life and even from one age to another to see how each age is wrapped in itself and that it condemns the very thing which, in another form, it practices. For I have seen, in an American city, the staging of what they called "a battle royal," between a dozen negroes in a ring, where all fought with the gloved fist only until one was left standing—a spectacle more brutal than anything in the Games, where at least men used the clean steel. And men kill pheasants in this England of to-day in *battues* more vile than anything of old Rome, for even the fighters in the sand did not leave their adversaries to crawl away half disembowelled to die in agony. And the men of our day hunt little foxes and say that the "little red dogs," as we call them in Éirinn, like it, even as the mob said of us gladiators in the old time,

which was a very great lie, for none of us fought of pleasure but of sad need.

In the bull ring of royal Spain, blinded horses drag their bowels in the hot sand, whilst kings and queens look on and the crowd applauds as even the Roman cowards did. And in all this, there is but one difference—we have now learnt to kill by machines and to kill our millions where before we killed our thousands.

For all is the same and we, save that we lie like hypocrites and to ourselves, as no pagan ever did—we, also, are still the same.

But in these Games of which I here speak, the crowd would rather have seen the duel, always the supreme morsel on the palate of death, than any *battue* of man or beast. That was why the glory of the Games was to conclude and to be extinguished in the death of one or the other of us two.

For was it not that Tauro had never been defeated, and did not this fight mean for him, if he won, freedom from the Games and wine, women, and sloth, for life? Was it not that his lustful brutishness was the pride of Rome, always perverse, and because perverse, was not the spectacle of my young soft flesh and fledgling brain pitted against his strength and craft a titillation for the Roman palate?

As for me, I scorned them all. And so I prayed to Brigid and to Mannanaun MacLir who rules the waters and to Lugh the little Sun-god to help me and to bring confusion to the Roman gods. Indeed, I was so set upon victory, that I nearly prayed to the White Christ, but that, I felt, He could not stomach. He did not love fighting and I feared a trick if I displeased Him after having invoked Him,

For, as I have said elsewhere, we pagans were not so foolish as to deny the existence of the gods of others, as foolish men do to-day, and as even the Christians did in the Rome of two thousand years ago. It was only that some of us believed that our own gods were the craftiest and most knowledgeable. And why should not my gods, who spoke of the stars and who told us that we were not beasts of the field but free men who might one day become even as they, be the superiors of those base Roman deities, which lived on blood and superstition? For the gods feed on the prayers of men and they are of the thing that is their food.

So it was that I did not fear Tauro.

The trumpets went again, that brazen clang which had sounded across a world under the overlordship of Rome and which had been the doom-clang of so many brave fighters. And so we advanced towards each other across the sand of the arena.

The hot sun was sinking and the place was a-reek with stale blood. About us, the thousands had ceased to give mouth and were watching us with the eyes of experience, appraising each point of body and brain.

We faced each other—a queer contrast. Tauro with his oak-like body, neck and torso scarred from a hundred combats and I, white and smooth as a girl but topping him by a whole head, my sword two hand spans longer than his and my shield half the weight of his own. But my helmet, until I got close up with him, I carried in my hand, and the red head flaming on me so that the people cried again: “Oh! you Red Shadow! Oh!”

I could see Nero, bulbous under his regal canopy,

and sagging in the imperial chair. Bloodshot eyes and vermilion face with the gold dust on it now streaked by the sweat that poured out of that gross body. By his side, the woman—the woman who a little while ago in this scented London garden shook her head back with the old free gesture.

I caught the sidelong scornful glance of her eyes that in all these Games, save one, looked steadily on blood and death. Nor can I reconcile this steady coldness with the little fiery creature that was inheld in that tiny body. For I have seen Deeshie order the lashing of a slave who had offended her in some slight way and, as he sank under the thong, I have seen her bind up his wounds with her own hands. The truth is I know nothing about the lady Deeshie—I knew nothing in Rome—I know nothing to-day. She may have been a mermaid, but she was also a woman. And, anyhow, all women are mermaids.

But as I had seen up to her as I came over the sand, my great nose sheering victoriously, it seemed to me, though coming from that great distance, that she looked down upon me with something more than indifference. And even as I looked, her left hand with the great dull green stone on the index finger, twining a red flower negligent over the edge of the high seats safe out of lion-spring, had dropped the flower in the hot sand. But whether by design or chance who could say?

But there was Tauro, waiting for me. And whilst he waited, he taunted.

Only last year I saw a black man fight a white man for the world's heavyweight boxing championship and he taunted him just as Tauro taunted me—taunted

him to make him lose courage and that faith without which neither courage, nor even life itself can exist, and to take which from a man is a great sin. Woe to those who do it ! For nothing changes. Not even the ways of the fighting man.

And so Tauro the swordsman taunted me. He told me of how he would make swordplay with me so as to give the people sport. Of how many had fallen before the point of his sword. And, because he knew it troubled me, he told me of what he had done to Virginia before they gave her to the lions and the hook-men.

But it was here that he made his mistake—the mistake that all the Roman world made with men like me. Not, indeed, that there were many like to me. But if I boast, it is of old habit and I mean it not. And yet, I mean it, too.

For in anger I am cold. And I felt the chill stealing to the nape of my neck under my helm to cool my brain.

The single trumpet had rung out with the signal to begin—and so we engaged.

Warily we encircled one another and all the time Tauro taunted. But instead of playing with me, as he had said, he pressed me from the beginning. He came in hewing at me as a woodsman hews at a young ash, striking upwards and under. And always my long legs carried me back into safety. Thrust-thrust and hack-hack. He grunted at each thrust but always my shield was there and even though he tried the old trick of hamstringing where the armour was not, yet I kept front to him and took the strokes on greaves or shield.

But through all this I did not reply.

And once he tried his over thrust, and I only saved the point from the place where neck and shoulder meet by turning it at the last instant with my sword. And even then it ran down over my shoulder leaving an ugly gash so that I bled freely. And as the blood gushed forth the crowd howled: "First blood! first blood!" even as I heard them howl when that black man fought that white as he struck him on the nose. But the sword had not gone deep and I was not incommoded, although I made play to be troubled, for it was not for nothing that I was sired in Conne-mara.

Tauro seeing this, pressed me still more. He taunted me as he came in:

"First your sword arm, with the wound that old Lupus gave you," he laughed, "and then the bite of that red-haired bitch in the hand, and now the fang of my blade in the neck. Now will I carve you in pieces and make play with you, little Shadow of Cuchullin that soon will be a shade." And again he came on.

Now this man Tauro relied upon his endurance. For indeed had he not once fought a famous swordsman named Glaucus from midday until sunset before he had killed him. But I was young and although forty is not old, yet already the stuff of age has begun to infiltrate the veins and arteries, and my shield was light, which Tauro did not know as yet.

Yet, though light, it could take all save the heavier thrusts of Tauro's sword unscathed. But once when he gave point at my throat and then at my stomach, as I lifted my shield to guard, he had driven the point of his short stabbing sword through the thin hide and

plaited wire with which it was covered, and through the hickory beneath to touch my skin. And so my secret was out.

"Parchment!" he said, "oh cunning Celt! And now we shall see if parchment can meet steel." And so he pointed again and yet again hoping to cut my shield to ribbons bit by bit and so get through at some vital spot.

And now I had to make an end or have an end made of me. And so, as offence is the best defence as old Lupus and little Cuchullin had taught me, I began to circle him rapidly and to give point until he grew dizzy as my blade played in lambent flame about him. Oh! but it was glorious there in the hot sand amidst the shouting thousands now giving tongue as they saw me come on and I feeling the pride of myself and of Ireland and of my gods. But I was fearful, too, and knew that a slip would mean my body stretched on the hot sand.

"And this and this and this for Virginia!" I said as I lunged at him. "And this for Ireland!" and I had loosed from the hip upwards and under his guard the short ripping stab which reached his side for an inch or two so that the blood now ran from him and down his leg.

"And this for Mannanaun and this for Nuada!" and I had given him the under and over, and the over reached his thick neck and his eyes began to stare a little as the eyes of men will when they first see death—for nobody indeed cares for death. Yet have I seen with my own eyes a Greek who for five long days prayed for the death that did not come. But of that I will speak in its own place.

Tauro was hard pressed, but he never lost his head. He parried again and yet again and even tried a riposte. And yet I waited for the trick which would come from him when death had him by the throat and wondered what it might be. I hoped that I might finish him ere he loosed it, but knew it could not be, for Tauro was still strong and lusty as I caught by the feel of his blade. He began to pant a little, but only a little, and so I too began to taunt :

“There are bellows to mend. You lose your breath, big Tauro. Perhaps the dancing girls have stolen it from you. Perhaps you have left your strength in their arms. Now, I do not know the dancing girls, and so I give you this, and this, and this.” And as I spoke I gave him the under-over-under—but he parried them all, though the last under nearly got home.

But I knew I had to use all my cunning to beat this man, and to beat him without revealing to Clistris and Pulta watching from the ringside the supreme trick which even the little dark Cuchullin did not know, that even Lupus did not guess, my very own, child of my own brain.

And so my sword arm, that left arm on which I depended for my life, grew weary. It stiffened as the fight went on, and once or twice it dropped a little, but always when Tauro was not within striking distance as I took very good care.

“And now the old left grows weary,” he said. “And now it is I who shall make an end.” I did not reply, feigning weakness, for I would get him where I would have him.

Confident, with his second strength, as we called it, running strong in his veins, he came on, he giving point

and I giving way. And then he knew that the moment had come and so he loosed the trick which had nearly been my undoing. For as he came in, he feinted to spring to my right, and as I turned to meet him throwing open my left flank he had sprung as it seemed almost in mid air to my left and had slashed at my kidneys naked to his blade.

But even as he slashed I had turned too, turned away from him so that his blade ran harmlessly past my small ribs and yet so close as to scratch them. But I continued my turn, and for one dangerous moment had my back to my adversary, and then as I swung about, still my back half turned to him, I reversed my stabbing sword in my hand so that I held it with my thumb over the hilt as a man uses a dagger for a downward thrust and had struck from my great height down between shield and face, the point striking him full in the hollow where the throat cords arch.

Oh! but it was the great stroke.

It was a trick I had proved a thousand times in the gymnasium, and I had learned to strike to the width of a finger, but I knew a great joy as I felt the soft yielding throat under the impact of the point and felt it slide down into his body up to the hilt.

He dropped from under my hand and turned his bloodshot eyes on me, but he could not speak. Yet he could understand, although the blood was gurgling out of his broken throat and mouth.

"And that is for Virginia!" I cried. But although the shouting mob had turned their thumbs down so that I might spare him, and not up as the historians have it, although it may be that a fickle memory has reversed this, I turned away after I had wiped my sword upon his

dark skin to show that even in death I despised him.  
And he knew it.

And as I turned I saw the eyes of that woman fixed on me, on my red hair and steel-blue eyes and now there was more than interest. There was a queer look if you understand me. But what was it—what did it mean? For the sun shone darkly enough and the dust rose high and the stench of sweat and blood was in the air, but I was drunk—drunk with happiness.

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## THE SIXTH MEMORY

### THE CHARIOT RACE

BUT the thing that was ginger hot i' the mouth for the Roman populace was a chariot race of a new kind. The noble ladies of Rome often went down into the arena to fight as woman gladiators in an age when every nerve had been wrung to the uttermost and the last bitter drop drained from the cup of pleasure. To go down into the sand and to come out again victorious was for the victor honour for all time, and the arena was used by these women, mad with lust and pride, to settle their private quarrels over their lovers, who would complacently give themselves to the victor, a third sex, neither men nor women.

Hitherto no woman had gone down into the sand to race. I myself have, however, seen ladies of the noblest patrician families fight to the death with knives in the arena, with their lovers as the prize, and even with the trident and net and sword—for so debauched had become the Rome under Nero that the woman had often turned herself into a sort of man, much as her successors two thousand years later in the political movements, have done. More—in these earth memories, I have recollection of women dabbling in the dirtiness that is politics in the madness that was Rome.

Yet are woman and man eternally the same and as

eternally different. And the longer turns the world the more different do they become. Enemies they were in the Rome of my day. Enemies they are, masked enemies, in the world of this day. Yet it may not always be so—and there was, to give it the lie, my little comrade and myself—but of that I will speak later.

For the noble women of Rome, as we say it in Ireland, were “cracked” after chariot racing, which was the fashion of the moment for women. Lady Thora owned the best team in the Roman arenas, a team of splendid white Arabs, which had galloped everything down, and which were driven by a young Arab, the greatest charioteer of the day; and she herself would take the reins sometimes in training them. But the first woman to drive a team of blood horses in Rome was the lady Deeshie, who had the lightest touch in life on the reins.

Now this racing of chariots was a sport unto itself—and a dangerous sport at that, demanding nerve and skill and indeed a certain amount of sheer muscle. The drivers were athletes trained to the moment, and judgment to the inch of distance, and of speed and reserve force, played the chief part in success. But they often died in the arena, flung from their chariots wheel-locked, crushed under the following wheels and hoofs.

Into all this fury of contest and blood the lady Deeshie had thrown herself with zest, often to my stupefaction, for never to the end could I say which was the real Deeshie—the little thing that could look like a beautiful child tender and yielding, or the fury with a thousand devils looking out of each of her two green eyes. With the knife, no woman in Rome could hold their own with her, for she had learned knife-play when a child in the Islands. And no woman dared to offend her or to go

down into the sand with her, although I do not doubt Deeshie, who could be very wild, was often more than ready.

So that when rumours began to spread in Rome from the palace, that den of whispering vipers, that the beautiful lady Thora and the lady Deeshie hated each other, it was supposed that the lady Deeshie would challenge the other to a duel in the sand with the knife. Rome, with its lascivious mind, believed that they were both quarrelling for the favour of Nero, although Rome knew also that the lady Deeshie at least was perhaps the only woman in Rome that Nero feared—and that because she was inviolate. He believed in the crazy way that he had, that she was the protected of the gods and that she had come out of the sea to him—hence her nickname—Lady out of the Sea.

When Rome heard for the first time that women were to race in the sand and that a chariot race had been arranged between the lady Thora's white Arabs and the lady Deeshie's black stallions, why, Rome went mad with joy. It was a new sensation. And Rome lived on sensations.

These teams had been talked over for many months. Some said that the whites were the fleeter but lighter—some that the lady Deeshie's great stallions were fleeter but heavier. But nobody really knew anything about the lady Deeshie's new team of blacks, which she had exercised alone in her estate beyond the hills.

My fight with Pulta was not to take place until the morrow—but to-day I would enjoy, yet, as was my way, thinking all the same of the morrow and its chances, as I approached the great Circus.

As I remember, it was a tremendous structure of

black and white marble columns on the outside, with many entrance gateways and noble approaches of alabaster pillars. Inside, it was stone built to the height of perhaps four men, from which rose the seats for the spectators, from the Emperor's own throne over the *podium* to the highest of all, where the mob sat under the full sun glare. Sometimes, I know, great sails were drawn over portions of the auditorium as shades from the fierce suns—but not always, though why, I cannot now remember. And running like a spine down the centre, the long low plinth, with, at the end where the chariots finished their courses, the torso of a bearded colossus, with arms set akimbo on hips and bright scarlet mouth opened to an expectant grin of disaster, as it looked over its shoulder, calling to the chariots to hurry to the goal.

The great gateways at either end and at either side were of imposing proportions. Through one of those at the ends of the ellipse marched the gladiators in procession at the opening of the Games. It was also through this gate that the men attached to the circus came, whilst through the other the wild beasts, the pulleys and cords and the machinery for the stage spectacles were brought in. Underneath the arena at the sides were the dens of the wild beasts, whilst a little to the left at one end, were the torture chambers, where animals were tortured before being turned loose or, after they had fought, were tortured the gladiators who had shown themselves cowards. Opposite, was the *laniarium*, where the dead were carried for taking away by the city scavengers.

There was in the Rome of that day a mass of white beautiful flesh that yet was carrion. Alive and vibrant one moment and carrion the next—that was Rome. Scented

bodies and filthy lusts in the high places—and in the low often hunger and disease, with poison and the knife doing their work secretly underneath. The Rome, the glory that was the Rome of which the modern world speaks so often to-day, was often a Rome of rottenness.

As I approached the great outside colonnade with its columns, that, as I judge, ran up sheer some one hundred and fifty feet, I found thousands crowding the approaches or finding their way through the different arches that gave on to their seats, which in many cases, as I recall, were numbered as in a modern theatre. There was Jew and Greek; Bœotian and Circassian; Briton and Latin. Persia and India had sent their quota to Games that were known throughout the world, and the wisest as well as the most careless were to be found within that arena.

Every costume was to be seen there—a kaleidoscopic scene that even now turns in the merry-go-round of memory. Long purple cloaks and magnificently ornamented togas with jewelled sword scabbards and embroidered shortened sleeves for the noble Roman—and even for the proletariat, or as we called them, the Plebs, colours deftly blending upon a living loom. Blue and green, white and orange, strove with saffron and crimson. Jews in high caps and Persian merchants in higher. Nubians out of Africa, the white molars shining in the ebony faces, with tall Arabs of the desert stalking through it all and everywhere the fortune-tellers. Sometimes the litter of some Greek or Circassian favourite with eyelids heavily leaded would be carried past on pillars of black slaves. Here a woman of the Indies, over whose head stood the fanning slaves, exhaled her perfumed beauty, or a courtesan of His-

pania dropped languorous glances at potential lovers. All this ordered by the Roman soldiers much as the modern policeman orders the streets of our day—for everywhere the Roman discipline was inviolate and neutral.

The green and blue and orange tides streamed through the main entrance, around which the betting men had already begun to wager upon the day's race. Jews, with faces of smiling cunning, their tablets on their arms, handed their stiluses to rich young noblemen, who would wager an estate upon a race. And the Roman law was strict—the same for Jew, Gentile and Roman alike—and all bets were, as I remember, enforced.

I stood there behind a column watching the whirlpool of lusty life with my cloak drawn a little over my face to shield myself from the hot sun. But already some of the dancing girls had noted me and, as was their custom whenever they saw my big high body, began to tease me—to say things that were not, and even, one of them, that red-haired bitch, to pinch me—an impossible situation. For what could I do? To be pinched by a steel no bigger than my elbow and not to be able to pinch back! Also, I was always tender with the women. I could not help it, for I was a man from a country where there was but one law for men and women alike—beautiful, gracious Éirinn.

A crowd had drawn about me to admire at me and to say, as was their way: "Oh, you Shadow!" But some of the boys, with whom I would often sport, had begun to make fun of me, and to taunt me with *Pulta*—as is the way of young boys, which indeed are trolls. Though maybe they liked me well enough too, for had I not often given them the sweet stomach things that boys love?

"Wait until Pulta lets go to-morrow," they would say, "and see where all that grandeur will be."

"In the dust," said another, "like a tall pine after the woodman has done his work."

So they taunted, and the dancing girls taunted with them, and the Roman soldiers, not wishing to mix themselves in something in which they might get the worst, for they all feared the dancing girls and the boys, held themselves aloof.

It was not, indeed, until I had picked up that saucy red minx to put her across my knee and to spank her with my open palm, and she spitting and tearing with tooth and claw, that I got easement—that and the patter of hoofs and the shouts of the crowd who stood back for the lady Thora's four white Arabs, driven by her stall-master, the two outsiders held down by a pair of African slaves whose dorsals knotted themselves under the sun as they tried to weight the plunging, mettlesome Arabs, entered the gate.

I was free of the place and so made my way round to the starting gates and so to the plinth. Already, two lines of Roman trumpeters, their horses alternately head to tail, had lifted their long clarions to announce the opening of the day's Games, and already Nero, his face shining with sweat, was in his place looking like a toad out of a pond.

There were four teams—for there was also a team of grey horses and one of bays, each driven by a woman. Yet the crowd knew full well the duel was between the lady Deeshie and the lady Thora and that the others, barring the accident so common in the arena, had no chance in the wide world at all at all.

And now the parade was about to begin—that driving past of all the chariots for the emperor and the crowd

to appraise the finer points of the horses and drivers and to wager accordingly.

First, from where I was watching, I saw the team of greys come trotting in, a brave show, though muscled a little heavily, and driven by a big strapping wench, a married woman who was, I think, in this flickering memory, the wife of one of Nero's generals. Then came the bays—a great team entirely—with the muscles sheening under the velvet of the skins. And then, to a great roar, the four white Arabs of the lady Thora with that big-breasted Amazon holding them back whilst two tall slaves walked at their heads to hold them down as they fought to get their heads free. Splendid she and they looked—five fine animals, with muscle and power behind them and the foam that flew from the jaws of the Arabs no whit whiter than the woman's skin above.

With slow power she confined that white torrent, and you could see the long muscles playing themselves under her white skin. As she drove past, she looked at me where I stood on the corner of the long raised platform under the grinning effigy above, with its arms akimbo and its open red scarlet mouth and the expectant grin of disaster on its face as it looked down on the sand. And she had the bold impudent look on her—that look that the women of noble Rome knew so well how to assume—brazen hussies that they were.

But as for me, strong as sin, I scarce looked at her—and I never cared much for brown-eyed women anyhow.

But it was the grand and lovely thing to be the debating point between two fine young women, and I am not denying it.

Well, you can leave it to the women, but they always know how to do it. I will swear that it was for the sake of effect that the lady Deeshie held back her entry until the last—and it a great entry itself.

She appeared under the gateway at the far end of the arena coming from the stables with a team that drew from those crowds, and they the good judges of a horse, a shout of admiring surprise. "Three horses," they shouted, "Three! Three! Three! Who ever saw three horses to a chariot before?"

Well, that seemed the mad thing too, for what chance would three horses have against four. And yet, maybe, as with all her sex, there was care behind her carelessness too—for let a woman alone never to do a thing without a reason, and we male men priding ourselves on our logic. I'd back any third-rate woman against any first-rate man of us all when calculation was served out.

What a team! Three coal-black stallions, the biggest devils of them all, but limber as greyhounds, with long legs like my own and muscled haunches and the muscle in the right place, the only thing that matters in horse or man. What long high necks and short pricking ears and small heads—and feet dainty as the feet of goats! Three great creatures that seemed to breathe white foam over their black coats and they moving like satin in the sand, with never a plunge or a kick from them, but trained like dogs, and she, my little lady, holding them easy as you like with the left, in her right a long quirt—a devilish looking thing it was, wicked like a thin red tongue.

Slowly they moved past Nero and then came to where I was standing on the edge of the plinth, fair and tall for all eyes to see. And she without even a glance at

me—and where was the red flower in the school of Lupus now, and the look she had given me and all! But did I not remember in that moment I was but a poor gladiator and she the highest lady in Rome, that always sat by the side of Nero.

The four teams were backed into their starting stalls, close to where the emperor sat, with the holding slaves lifted from their feet as they plunged.

Her chariot was a thing to delight the eye—a graceful thing of silver, feather light, and with a pair of the lightest wheels that had ever been seen upon a racing chariot. It was slung between a U bar, to the outside of which the leather-sheathed traces were fixed and its sides slanted back like a pair of wings. The lady Deeshie herself was dressed in a robe of that sea-green bronze that she so often wore, and that clung to her like seaweed, her long arms bare to the shoulders, and her long black hair coiled close to her head like a nest of snakes in a way I had never seen it dressed before. She looked so tiny and yet so perfect in that chariot that she might have been born there.

And now the three starters had taken up their positions with their long white starting flags, which they held point down in the sand. The four teams were in line, the flags were lifted and dropped and they were off!

Oh! what a cry went up as the four teams stretched themselves to it. The thunder of the hoofs in the hard sand and the roar of the wheels. Neck and neck they raced for the first of the thirteen turns of the seven circlings which they had to make to finish almost under where I stood.

The greys and the bays jumped away together at the crack of the whip, for their drivers knew that their only

chance with their slower teams was to take the lead at the beginning and trust their greater powers of endurance to hold it. The bays forged ahead at the first turn, around the other end of the plinth, taking it on the inside and so securing the advantage, for in that way they had less ground to cover. The driver, a tall woman, an avenging fury with hawk nose and thin piercing eye, was holding them in as they swept about under the grinning face of that monster, the greys treading on their heels.

Tip to tail they raced, with the blacks and whites biting into their spinning wheels, the whites slightly leading, as they had got more quickly into their stride from the jump off.

To the beat of the hoofs, the soft grind of the wheels, and the crashing roar of the crowd, they swept around my plinth on the second of the seven rounds they had to make. And now the greys and bays were racing wheel to wheel, with the bays still held in a little, as it seemed to me by that fury of a woman and the strapping wench driving the greys letting them out in an effort to pass the bays and by securing an early lead to hold it till the end of the race by shutting the others out from the short turns.

Wheel and wheel they raced, with behind them, the triple blacks gradually dropping to the rear of the whites, and Thora with a smile of triumph on her face with her mane of hair knotted behind, looking like a thoroughbred herself. "Ho!" she cried, "ho! ho!" For she was letting them out on the third whirling, but as yet no one had used the whip.

She was driving hell for leather to challenge the greys, with the horses fighting madly to get their heads, their eyes set like red garnets in the sides of their white faces. In vain, did the bays in front seek to keep their lead.

Inch by inch, the wheels of the Arabs and of the greys began to run down the bays, which, though they were still leading, had by now run beyond themselves, for the first crack of the whip was heard as the fury that drove them let them have it across their backs.

All three chariots were now running for the fourth circle with the three blacks dragging their white chariot behind them as though it were a bubble and hanging on behind. There was reserve about them it seemed to me—but who was I to judge? For every man to his weapon, and I was no chariot racer. And now the greys and the white pink-eyes were head to tail, with the whites fast drawing up, as all three raced for this fourth round under where I stood, the bays still in front. One of the bays had sprung a little wide under the whip and so the thin woman had come out a little. The lady Thora, seeing this, had seized the chance and had brought her Arabs across to the inside, gradually to force the bays out from their inside position.

It was in that moment I saw the lady Thora turn her head for a breath to measure the three blacks running like the wind behind the three leading teams, but on the outside. She was now driving her way between the bays and the wall with the greys quickly being left, but trying to hang on as a dog will hang on to the tail of a bull. It was on that stroke, I saw her throw her team a little out and across the path of the bay thunderbolt travelling on her outside, apparently to force it out. It seemed innocent enough—as though she were trying for the inside place and, done properly, there she had the right of it—the right of way. But as she raced up alongside the bays almost underneath where I stood, I saw her take her whip and as she came level and they were round-

ing the turn, I saw her strike the near bay across the snout with her whip—an awful understroke, scarce to be seen by the judges. Then the brute had screamed and reared outwards from the whip to drive the greys, which also swerved, right across the path of the lady Deeshie, coming up on the outside.

It was here that her three horses, handy, manageable, saved her—four she could not have controlled. For almost without thought she had turned them, not to the outside, but to the inside, pulling them clean across towards the wall berth and so escaping death in the sand.

For the bays, rearing over against the greys, had torn off their near wheel to throw the chariot on its side. For a few yards, the maddened brutes dragged it in the sand, only to fall in one kicking, shrilling heap and to lie there close to the plinth for the rest of the race. The driver lay on the sand where she had fallen and I saw the hook-nosed woman herself take as sudden a dive over the side of her chariot as though she had been shot from the mouth of a catapult, for her team to dash madly on, faithful to their training, driverless, making their turns with precision.

Oh the noble brutes! And the people screamed again.

But there was murder in the jade eyes of the lady Deeshie as she swept past underneath me, holding her three black stallions in their white chariot well back, just behind the white Arabs, herself now on the inside. And I seemed to know what she would be at.

And now, the lady Thora, balked, and with her sole remaining rival challenging, was set on keeping her lead, lashing her Arabs until the weals came out on the white

satin of their coats. "Ho-ho!" she cried full-chested. "Ho-ho!" Again and again she struck them across back and head with Deeshie racing up alongside on the fifth circling.

The fifth, as the sixth, they made with the blacks half a length behind, and the driverless bays still dashing madly around on the outside and almost holding their own despite their wide turns. And the crowd shouted again, although they could not have won without their driver who, like her opponent, had been taken up from the sand, but whether dead or maimed I could not say.

And now the arena had gone mad as they saw the new challenge, nor could I understand what the lady Deeshie would be after, for I, even I that was no horseman, could see that she was holding in her three great blacks that reared again as they tried to fight their heads free, and she was using both hands to hold them, for not once had she had to use her whip.

Foot by foot she drew up upon her big-breasted opponent, whose horse mane was flogging loose in the wind, drew up on her as they reached the other end of the plinth for their last turn, for I had crossed the width of the plinth to watch them. Looking the length of the low wall, as I came back again, I could see them racing neck and neck around the end of the plinth as they came down the straight, racing for the opening between the overturned chariot and the plinth, where there was but just room for the two to pass. I could see the fury that now was the lady Deeshie, letting out her stallions, draw level with her big opponent; I could see her come up upon her a little, and then I had seen her lock her wheel for a flying moment in that of her opponent, to send the black chariot of the

lady Thora shooting sideways against the fallen chariot and overturn, and to see the lady Thora flung over the heads of her horses, like a stone from a catapult. She lay there in the path of the great black stallions, which drove triumphantly over her to crush her into the sand with their hoofs and to pass on to victory in face of the emperor.

There was a thin spatter of blood on the face of the white chariot as it drove into the straight to pass the flagmen. But there was blood, too, in the face of the driver.

## THE SEVENTH MEMORY

### SWORD AND SLING

THE last day of the Games had come, the day for which Pulta and myself were to provide the final thrill in the orgasm that was Rome. All Rome was seething with the story of the chariot race of the day before and of the death of the lady Thora, and it was felt by many that my fight with the Balearian slinger would be an anti-climax. "Why did not Nero keep the chariot race to the last?" they asked.

As for me, I had no doubts. I knew that I at least would give that fickle populace one last thrill, even though I should die in the giving, for Pulta had a reputation that was his own in that city of blood—because of his strange skill with the stone and because of his speed and cunning.

He had a dozen tricks to make a swordsman lower his shield so that he might send one of his pellets singing into the brain and if, with his pellet bags empty, forced to come into his man, a most deadly clutch. But I, who had now faced forty and seven opponents, and at least ten of them of the first rank as fighters, had no fear. Had I not been coached by old Lupus for this very encounter since the last Ides? Had I not watched this same Pulta and his fellows from the

ringside? And had I not made their cunning my lesson book?

All the same, had it been a swordsman, my mind would have been the easier. There was something so sleuthy about these slingers and a pellet that sang in the sunlight invisible as the air through which it sang. Something unavoidable. That, and I was always afraid before a fight, with a funny little tremble at the knees, though happy.

Also in fighting Pulta, I would not be fighting a man so much as an animal. For these slingers were not much more than cunning animals—ape-like, with the speed and instinct of the brute. In a way, there could be no more glory in defeating them than if they had been mad dogs that one did to death in self-defence. Yet it was this man-monkey that Nero, with his ingenious cunning, had chosen to be my penultimate opponent before I faced the man whose death was perhaps to be my franking of the arena—Clistris the Cat, for even Nero would scarcely deny me that, if I killed the greatest fighter in Rome.

The technique against the slinger, as I well knew, was something other than that of the technique against any other sort of opponent. The sole object of the swordsman was to get the slinger to exhaust his pellets, of which Pulta was to be allowed one hundred, and then to bring him in on the sword to die. I had learned all that Lupus could teach me and he, cunning old wolf, had pressed into the service a Balearian slinger to whom he had once done a favour, who had known Pulta before that artist in death had been brought to Rome.

"He is cunning as the weasel is cunning," he had said in the idiom of the Isles. "I know some of his

tricks—but I do not know all, and there will be always one trick which he will keep until the last.”

When the Roman trumpets went on that sunlit morning for the closing day of the Games, there had been done to death in the bloody arena of the Circus over five thousand beasts and two thousand men and women with the lady Thora. Amongst these men were the coward gladiators who had been taken to the torturers and whose cries could be heard, to the great delight of the mob, coming to them from the torture chambers outside the arena. And these cries served but to make the others fight the more desperately and to die on the sword rather than on the rack or under the whip and branding iron.

The sun was still high when the wrack of dead after the last *mêlée* in which four hundred gladiators had participated, had been dragged away by the hooks struck into the bellies, and the sand made fair again with the rakes of the rakemen.

I entered the arena to make my obeisance to Cæsar, alone, for so would he have it. Pulta had already done the same, so that the great arena was empty as I entered.

Armed with helm, sword and shield, I walked across the sand for the people to cry again and again: “Oh! you Shadow!” their way to express admiration. As I walked alone, and walked on air, lightheaded and light-hearted as I always was before combat, I could see in the distance and above me, the laurel crown of Nero and the glaucous face under the purple canopy, with Clistris standing just behind. But where yesterday on either side of him had been the lady Thora and the lady Deeshie, to-day there was but a single figure, looking down at me with face vibrant as a spent bow, but a face

that said nothing. Already, as I knew, the populace had acclaimed the lady Deeshie as she had entered with Nero, and it was said that Nero had been jealous and had frowned, for Nero had the fancy that he could drive a chariot as well as an empire. He sat there, the frown still on his face, looking gloomily down upon me as was his way when anything had displeased him, as I flung my right hand, without sword, above my head in the Gaelic way. But instead of making the time-honoured "*Ave Cæsar! morituri te salutant!*" I made one of my own, prepared for the occasion, for if I was to die I would die in the grand way.

"Oh! great Cæsar!" said I, "not he who is about to die but he who is about to live salutes you—to live for you and in your service, when he is free of the arena as he will be when he has done that which he has to do." And with that I looked upon the noble Clistris at his side, as I meant to do, and to put the fear of Cuchullin into him. With that I lowered my hand and so, as the trumpets went for the combat to begin, had turned to meet Pultā, who at that moment slunk through the barred gate that, by sinking, gave the fighting men admittance to the arena and which was called, I think, the Gate of the Gladiators. He looked almost an ape in the sand—but an ape charged with death.

He was naked save for a slim loin cloth to which hung the two wallets containing each fifty pellets, and his sling. He stood there for a moment, blinking at me under the sun like some animal let out of its cage. As for me, I came to the centre of the arena, which had been netted off at that end for our combat, to watch him and to keep behind me the net so that he should not have a background.

After a while, he came towards me a little and then began to circle about me, loping away from me like a wolf, all this without taking his sling from his tiny waist. It seemed that he wished to spy out the land before attacking it—and indeed I was to him as a continent to an island—yet there was not one man or woman there who did not know that in that small island was more danger than in all my great body. He looked in a way so harmless and yet so menacing there in the sunlight.

As for me, as he loped about me, I pivoted with him, to watch him and to see what he would be at. With that, and still with the sling unfastened, he ran in on me and swerved as I lashed at him with the point of my long sword so that it but missed his slim body by the breadth of his skin. And this he did several times as though to puzzle me and to feign attack at my throat with his naked hands instead of using the sling.

But I reserved myself there under that strong sun and with the armour heavy on me, letting him run and lope to his heart's content. Yet, his tactics, never seen by me before, did trouble me. What would he be at?

It was as he turned after one of his loping runs that I saw something twirling in his hand. I could hear the swish of the leather as it spun, rising ever on a higher note until it screamed again, to become invisible. And then as I, with my eyes just above the level of my light shield, watched out, something sang in the sunlight to spatter upon the rim of my shield as I lifted it. For I had but lifted it in time as I saw the tautening of the shoulder muscle which signalled the release of one end of the sling.

It was a trick of observation that Lupus had taught me.

For it was not yet time to reveal my own secret—the thing that I hoped would turn the day.

Again and again the little man twirled his sling, and again and yet again there was the harmless spatter of the stone pellet on the shield. Yet an inch and it would be sent through my forehead to my brain and so *vale* the Red Shadow.

And that I thought would be for the world, and my empire of that same world, a monstrous pity.

It was then he began a quick circling movement, running about me in ever narrowing coils and twirling his sling the while, hoping for a moment's unawareness when a lowering of the shield would mean the end of the combat. But I—I kept pivoting, and now the hot sun shone upon his glistening body and it seemed to me, after an hour of that business, that he was beginning to tire.

Also, I, with the sun behind, had worked my way backwards into the black shadow made by an angle of the plinth wall, so that he had the sun in his face and with me as but a poor target. And with all his cunning I would not come out of my shadow but compelled him to stay outside in the hot sun, now beating pitilessly down upon his naked flesh and tousled head.

He had perhaps loosed more than half of his pellets and at each loosing the crowd howled. The sun crept downwards foot by foot and we might have been fighting for two or three hours. Never had there been seen such a combat between a slinger and swordsman, although such combats were often prolonged. Even Nero forgot to straighten the laurels which were awry on his head, and the slant eyes of the lady Deeshie stared down upon me from above. For I, vain enough, would be looking at them to see what they thought.

But I, counting his pellets, a counting that wearied my brain, had counted up to seventy-seven, and watched the little cunning eyes of Pulta as he continued to circle, looking for a breach in the walls of my city. In vain did he try to disable me by slinging a pellet through my thighs, but my extra long shield kept me protected, and when he tried to reach the calves of my legs as I turned, where the greaves did not lap, he also failed, for always I held quick front to him. At last, in despair, he began to shoot at my feet, but I, schooled by Lupus, had placed footguards there so that his pellets glanced off harmlessly enough. He even tried a spattering of his missiles upon the plinth wall behind me so that a chance splinter might blind me or reach my back, but although stung again and again, he failed to do more than sting.

And now the crowd could see that Pulta was puzzled. But his puzzlement did not show until he had been fighting me a full two hours. Again and again, although my shield seemed to be raised before my eyes, I circled and guarded like a man who saw—and to him, a Balearian and superstitious, who had had a messenger sent to him the night before that the Shadow was the protected of the gods and being a shadow, could see in darkness, he began to fear. And the beginning of fear is the beginning of death—at least in the sand.

At the long last, when I had counted up to one hundred and now felt sure of him though my back was bleeding from a hundred splinters, so that at the last I had been forced to come out from the wall, I lowered my shield for a moment to taunt him. It was in that moment, he, twirling as I thought an empty sling in pretence, saw the muscles tauten and so at the last

instant had raised the edge of my shield and at the same moment had leaped to one side but not soon enough—for the muscle between neck and shoulder had been severed by the pellet, which had rushed through, so that the blood streamed down upon me.

Again and again, seeing me weakening, he had twirled his sling to send pellet after pellet at me—until I had counted to the hundred which indeed had now been my undoing, for thinking all his bolts spent I, laughing at the pretence of his twirling empty sling, had carelessly drawn in on him, lowering my shield the while. At that instant he had released the sling for me to catch the whine and the stroke together—a burning stroke.

And now I understood. For he had released his sling again and again without pellet so that I might lose count. But that trick he could not play on me again.

Yet the time did come when he was pelletless and so, by the rules, was forced to throw his sling down in the sand in acknowledgment and to come in with the naked claws, at which the crowd shouted with joy.

I watched this crippled thing crawl in to try one last clutch for life. And then, out of bravado, with the lady Deeshie looking down, what should I do but something no man in Rome had ever done before—I threw away my sword and shield in the sand and my helm to wait for him with the naked hands, for I was a wrestler of merit.

And so I stretched out my hands in the way that wrestlers do, as he came in, and glimpsed the lights in his small eyes as he saw what I had done. And then as he rushed in the last yard I had turned my back on him whilst the crowd held its breath and had met him full

in the stomach with my heel to send him base over tip half a dozen yards away from me. After a moment, he picked himself up, I giving him time to recover for I *would* do this thing in the grand way. And once more he stole in on me but hoarse-breathing and coughing blood, at which my heart rejoiced.

And then, as he sprang again, but with the first strength out of him, to clutch at my throat, I had set my grip in his hair and swung him out from me in a circle until he was dizzy—and then, reversing my hold, I had taken him by the slender ankles and had whirled him about my head again whilst the crowd shouted and so had dashed his brains out against the wall underneath where sat Cæsar with my lady.

But what I did not tell the crowd was that in the rim of my shield were two spy-holes which I had made, nor did I tell them of the message I had sent to Pulta the night before.

For you can't keep the Irish down and I wasn't red for nothing.

## THE EIGHTH MEMORY

### THE LADY DEESHIE

It was after this that the lady Deeshie sent for me.

I was resting in the school of the gladiators with Lupus by my side giving me counsel about that Clistris, the netsman, whom I was next to fight, and I listening to him idly indeed to speak the truth, for I was young and prideful and believed since Tauro and Pulta that no fighter in the arenas had a chance against me—although I was cunning and wary enough also as was my way and perhaps listening to more than he knew or thought to know.

But old Lupus had stopped and was looking at a slave who stood in the entrance to our courtyard. He was a giant negro and his head near spanned my own and then he had crossed the yard in the slothful way of his race and had delivered his message to Lupus. And such a message.

For I was wanted at the Palace. But who wanted me he would not say. Yet he showed the amulet of Cæsar which all had to obey.

But the forehead of old Lupus was wrinkled like that of an ape and the white scar ran livid across his face as was his way when he was troubled.

“I had wished you had been sent for from almost anywhere else,” he said, frowning as he looked at me.

"Men go to the Palace and do not return. Can it be that you have offended anybody?" And again his brows puckered themselves together until his face looked like that of a jackal.

"Perhaps I have and perhaps I haven't," I said laughing at him. "And perhaps it is the lady Deeshie."

He jumped from the rubbing bench of stone where he sat as though I had struck him.

"Then if that be it," he said, "it is '*ave atque vale*'." But I laughed at him, he looked so grave. And yet I feared, too.

For I remembered the strange tales of that palace, white-throned over Rome. Of its torture chambers and of the underground galleries where the nobles held their banquets and strange orgies. Yet, because I was young and hopeful and perhaps at heart unafraid, I wished to see inside of Nero's palace and the woman who held my interest and perhaps more than my interest. For already I was beginning to remember and to think that this was someone I had known before, but when? For I yet did not know that I had lived before.

The negro brought me through the palace guards armed with spear and shield and helm-capped, and everywhere at the sight of the amulet the guards gave way. My black guide and I had traversed many galleries and we had come out again into the open and had turned to the right by the high wall of marble—how clearly I can see it even now—when we found ourselves outside a great square courtyard also of white marble and, at the other side, heavy curtains of some green stuff of the sort that the Phrygian merchants sell.

We crossed the yard and halted before the curtains, where my guide left me standing and looking about me.

Now, I was tall as a column and as, kilted in green, I stood there, looking about me, and if truth be told again, wondering if my hair were still confined by its silver fillet in the way I would have it—set just over the eyes—for I was very vain and proud of it, I thought that it might be that unseen eyes were watching me. I doubt not that my young blue eyes were fierce and uncowed enough.

But, still, my great height always gave me that feeling of being superior which only height can give. For, indeed, you may have all the philosophies of the Eight Wise Men and if you haven't height you might as well be a fool—always excepting Cuchullin, who in any company, even by my own side, looked king of everyone there. There was, indeed, a sort of distinction about his smallness if you can understand me.

And then the curtains had parted in the middle and my black guide had stared out at me with rolling eyeball and important mien—they always made me laugh, those black men—and had beckoned to me with a lordly air, which changed to one of extreme humility as he ushered me across a tiny interior court in the centre of which a slender spray fell into a fountain of onyx and on the other side of which was a low square archway in the Greek fashion closed by the same curtains of green silk.

These curtains he parted, holding them for me to pass through, to find myself in a long rectangular room of white marble set cunningly with green stone like that from my own Connemara. Facing me was a long low couch with lion, panther, and tiger skins upon it and large cushions covered with many coloured silks but chiefly of the emerald green of which the room was

composed. The light came from a high rectangular opening set deep in the roof.

I stood there alone, for the negro had disappeared, to look about me, and as I stood, I leaned carelessly upon the rod of metal upon which the curtains ran, that might have stood nine feet from the ground. I did all this, for I felt that I was being watched, but I would not pretend to know it.

And as I stood there, looking indifferently out from me, I suddenly became aware of something watching me. I looked down to find close to me and standing under the lee of my shoulder the Lady Deeshie that men called "Lady out of the Sea."

"You have a long reach, gladiator," she said, looking at me in the shy quick way and her voice coming to me with a deepness in it like the fall of the waters over the rock into the fairy pool of Avoca. But I, for all my possession, had quickly dropped my arm from the curtain rod, and, kilt-clad, yet stood easily but proudly enough as I hope, before her.

And that was the first time I ever spoke to the lady Deeshie that I know of a surety. But since then I have met her in other lives and if we met before this time, then I do not know it and so cannot speak of it, for I will not say the thing that is not. Yet indeed, in a way, I did remember her.

I bowed my head to her, but pridefully, not making the Roman salute but throwing my right hand above my head as is the way of my country. For where the former is a benison the latter is a challenge.

But the lady Deeshie had gone back to her divan and had dallied there whilst, hollow-cheeked, she gazed out at me from under level brows, like something hiding

under a rock. And I, for all that I was but slave and gladiator, looked back at her steadily even though I felt the blood rush to my face.

"Why do you blush, gladiator?" she asked me and there was a great innocence in the way she said it with the shadow of a smile around the curve of the lips.

"I did not know I blushed, lady," I said, and blushed the more redly. "'Tis a trick I have always had. My mother told me of it and I a boy on the hills of Conne-mara."

"You need not have shame for that," she said. "But there are few men and no women in Rome who know how to blush. Yet they told me you were but a girl. A great girl." And she laughed a little. But it was a laugh that I did not like. So I looked at her steadily enough but held my peace—always a difficult thing with me unless I was very angry. And I was not yet very angry.

"You do not fear me, do you, that you look so straight at me? I am used to slaves who lower head and eyes when in the presence of the lady Deeshie."

And now I felt the cold run up like a spear of ice to the nape of my neck. "I am no slave," I said, "even though I was taken in the Roman net by the accident of war. I am an Irishman and a warrior and the son of kings." But even as I said it, I trembled, for I knew it could mean death and though wary enough in my own way, when angry I would out with it even though death trod on the heels of it.

The lady Deeshie did not reply, but looked at me steadily, in her green eyes the yellow lights coming and going as they will in those of a cat, with such insolent pride that although I hated her for it, I nearly loved her, too—

for in the men of my country love and hate are never far divorced, and indeed it may be that they have the same father. Often in my dealings with the lady Deeshie I have thought that. For indeed no man has known true love for his lady who has not known true hate too.

Then she had spoken with that flicker of red tongue from between her lips like the sting of a serpent, a gesture of disdainful contempt.

"Perhaps we shall find a way to make you less prideful," she had said. But I still regarded her, until at last her own eyes fell and a faint colour, perhaps of anger, stole into the ivory of her cheeks.

"My life is in your hands," was all my answer, but I said it with proud reserve.

"You are a terribly tall and a terribly strong man," she piped, her tone changing like the wind. "Now, let me see, what might be your height? Will it hold itself to that of Samba, who led you here? . . . Yes, I think he is as tall as you," she said as though guessing.

"Let me see," she added with one of those sudden movements which I was to know so well. "I can walk under Samba's arm—but perhaps I cannot walk under yours." And she had risen and had come to me. But I, I stood there like a statue of marble.

"Lift your left arm," she said in sharp command.

I, I had no way but to obey, and so, although I did not want command, I made the effort, but could not, for Pulta's pellet had lamed the muscles of the upper arm so that when I tried to lift it, stiffened, it fell helpless.

Then this strange girl had made a dart forward, and if there were not pity on her face then I do not know women . . . and I do not. But her face had hardened and she had said again :

"Do what I tell you !"

But I had lifted my right shield arm, under which she walked contemptuously to come to my other left side.

"I said your left," she said again.

Again I tried to lift it and again I could not, but I was too proud to tell her why, although had I stripped the toga from my left shoulder she would have seen the reason in the scar that hid itself in the neck hollow.

"Why do you not do what I tell you ?" she asked again and now she was angry.

Now I also was angry and without reason, for how could she know ? And yet why was it she had not remembered my wound which she herself had seen in the arena ? For so illogical can men be when they are Irishmen and therefore half women.

"I will have you whipped," she said. She clapped her hands and Samba and two other slaves came a-running.

"Fetch your whips," she said, and waited, whilst I stood before her, silent.

When they had returned with the whips with which they used to beat the slaves, she said once more :

"Lift your left arm or feel the lash."

But now I would not, but looked down at her hard and proud as herself with I do not doubt what lightnings blazing in the blue of my eyes.

She had signalled and two of the slaves had made to fasten on me to throw me forward for the lash and to strip my back, ready for Samba who stood there waiting, arm upraised. But I, my blood now running high, had taken the one, as he ran in, by woolly head and had placed my knee in his back to draw back his head until it snapped

and he fell from me, his neck broken. But that was an easy trick though I did not tell the lady Deeshie so—we often did it in Ireland with young bulls. The other seeing the fate of his comrade, fell off and would not touch me, in which he showed a very fitting sense of occasion.

Samba still hung there with his bull-whip raised and there I stood with my toga torn down from my white shoulder leaving shoulder and flank exposed. The slave did not lower his whip but stood there, his eyeballs rolling, with white teeth and red gullet showing in ludicrous amazement.

But the lady Deeshie also stood there, her eyes set on my bare shoulder. And then she had darted forward and for one naked moment I saw something like pity change into her face.

But all she did was to say to Samba: "Take this man out of the palace and back to the place whence he came. I will not look again upon his face." But there she lied, as you shall hear. For, indeed, like all her sex, the lady Deeshie could be a very great liar as occasion befitted.

And that was my second meeting with Lady out of the Sea but not my last, as will be told in its own place.

## THE NINTH MEMORY

### CLISTRIS

It was from old Lupus that I heard the story of Clistris and the lady Deeshie, a memory that stands out perfectly distinct—separate from all the rest—yet like all the rest blurred as though I had heard it in a dream with words, people and places merging. For I do not pretend to remember the exact words of this or of any conversation—I but give you the gist as though the words like the people, came to me in echoing memory. For, indeed, it was the talk of Rome where scandal ran, as it runs even to-day, on slipping feet. He told me the story one night of silver with a great white moon floating high over the Palatino.

Clistris wanted the lady Deeshie to wife and had given to its pursuit as he gave to everything he did the same cat-like cunning and persistence. He had even obtained Nero's consent 'twas said, though indeed this I believe not, for Nero was as jealous of her as any mad lover could well be, and that, although she gave him scant encouragement, he was really her mad lover I sometimes suspected. Indeed there was but one thing in the way—the consent of the lady Deeshie herself.

Had Cæsar said it must be, then it must have been, even though the lady Deeshie had died by her own hand the moment after her nuptials.

“For she is a strange thing, that same lady Deeshie,” old Lupus had said in that shrewd way of his. “She is one of the children of the moon. She is as wayward as the spotted pantheress which the Parthian has tried vainly to tame, and it seems to me that she has the same claws and teeth and the same cunning. But what her power is over the great Cæsar nobody knows—yet he will not force her to the Imperial will.

“As for this man Clistris, he has of course the right of her. A pretty thing that in Rome maidens shall say what they shall or shall not do with their bodies. Admit that, and there is an end to all decency and to all discipline.” For the idea of discipline ran through everything Roman, and, if truth be told, destroyed everything. Rome gave her captive nations roads and bridges, but she destroyed their souls, as perhaps is the way of all empires, for when the empire rises, the individual falls. Empires are fashioned out of the stuff of souls.

## THE TENTH MEMORY

### IN THE PALACE OF NERO

It was midnight in the dormitory of the school of Lupus and the moon-slants came through the high square windows of the room where I and the other gladiators lay on the night that I got my second call to the palace.

The night was hot and I could not sleep and so it was that I watched the play of the moonbeams on the opposite wall as they trembled through the high acacia that grew outside in the courtyard and saw those massive sleeping forms prepared for the sacrifice through long days and torrid nights—flesh fashioned to make a Roman holiday.

There stretched the great bulky length of Gallio, the swordsman, with whom, to my great grief, and his, I had been matched, for indeed I could not bear to give him the blade or he me. Yet, indeed, we slew in cool blood and, though comrades, did what we had to do in that nightmare that was Rome. And when comrade killed comrade he gave him the point in merciful quickness even as he said farewell to him in the burning sand.

On the stone bench near him and turning in his sleep lay young Janus, the chariot racer, his maimed leg bound stiffly by the surgeons. And indeed he should not have been in the school of old Lupus, who only took fighting

men, but because he had the great cunning with medicaments and unguents and was clever with broken limbs, they had sent Janus to us.

That chariot-racing was a dangerous sport, not much less dangerous than that of the sword and net and sling. Often had I, the Shadow of Cuchullin, marvelled at the charioteers and the skill with which they rode the whirlwind, as they drave their four Phœbuses around the circus, wheel to wheel, whip to whip, and trick for trick—with the grinding crash of the interlocking wheels, the thunder of the hoofs, and then perhaps on the sand a bloody maimed body with the marks of hoof and wheel upon it. And faith! it was not everything or everybody at which the Shadow of Cuchullin marvelled.

I looked at Janus to wonder at all this life of Imperial Rome and to wonder again. I looked at the lank frame of Spindicus the Spider, an Ausean who fed on insects and hideous to behold, who had invented a new sort of circular net like a spider's web and used for weapon a sting flung from a cone shaped like a torch which, running out, tipped with poison, killed as surely as the lightning stroke. The poison he made, as I knew, from the decaying bodies of animals, a trick he had learned from that remote tribe from which he came and which had fought off the Imperial grip for weary years until Maxmillius had penetrated to their fastnesses and had finally brought their leaders in triumph to Rome to receive high honour and broad lands from Nero, who knew how to reward.

But Spindicus himself had also not gone unrewarded, for Rome knew how to reward perversity . . . and at this time she was being slowly eroded by the unnatural, having exhausted all that honest fighting and honest

love could give. And Spindicus had been given his special privileges such as the right of entry to the arena apart from the other gladiators, although whether he cared for it and what really went on behind that strange high frontal bone and sunken eye, who could say ?

I was looking at him as he sprawled like some giant crustacean, in ungainly sleep, with face and ear and nostril sprouting hair, and thinking of the paralysis which his poisons induced in his victims so that they crawled about the arena like things with back broken and dragging loin as the swinish crowd shouted with laughter, when the curtains across the end of our dormitory parted to show the face of Lupus, dead white in the moonlight. And if ever I saw fright upon a man's face I saw it on the scarred face of Lupus.

"Come!" was all he could say. "Come, quickly! You are wanted up at the palace with your sword and your pipes, and it is Nero himself. Come!"

I lay there on my couch with the woollen blanket over me and I naked as from my mother's womb, for I could never do what those others did—go to bed in my underlinen and it stiff with sweat, for the gladiators had many superstitions and they thought it healthy. I was dainty as a girl, at which the others often laughed—and indeed I was proud of that as of so many other things that separated me from the rabble, some of whom I hated and some of whom I loved and hated together as was my way. For I had often the great sorrow and pity for them, although, as it seems to me to-day, they did not often need my pity or understand it when it was given. Yet they liked me, too, these great fellows, often simple as little children, though ruthless in battle.

“Do you not hear me—it is Nero?” and Lupus seemed to wrench the words from out his breast. For the name of Nero carried a terror and a command which I cannot hope to convey. But I, I lay there as though I did not know Nero—which of course was only pretence, for I knew him very well indeed, and in my way, feared him too, but not too much, as became one who had fought with the great Cuchullin and lived.

So I said to try him, for I sometimes loved to tease old Lupus—“Which Nero?”

“Oh! great Jupiter, hear him!” he wailed. “Listen ye gods and little fishes”—for old Lupus’s mouth was full of quaint oaths—“listen to this mad Hibernian whose flesh will yet feed Nero’s little fighting fish.” For Nero had a great tank up in the palace full of tiny fish not half the length of my little finger and brought from one of the countries of the South, to which he would throw disobedient slaves, who would be stripped flesh from bone and nerve in the twinkling of an eye by the tiny striped demons.

“I am not yet food for Nero’s fishes,” I said as I lolled there, “and let Nero look to himself.” For I was finely insolent as became a man of my race and station and indeed I felt I did it very well . . . but I was frightened enough, too.

And now Lupus’s face was white with terror as he threw himself on me to hold my throat and pointed to the sleeping fighters. “If they heard!” was all he said.

But now I had teased him enough and so I threw back the striped blanket and stood out there, the moonlight playing on my white skin and high stature. And a very pretty picture I doubtless made, At least old Lupus

seemed to think so, for he said as though half to himself :

“Ye gods ! what a body !” And then : “Walk warily, little brother up in the palace, where serpents lie hidden. I want that white body for the Games and, at last, for the great Clistris.” For that was how the old veteran always spoke of Clistris—as though he were more god than man.

“Wait until you see what I will do to Clistris,” I mocked.

But old Lupus only looked at me pityingly.

“Oh for the body of youth with the head of age,” he said. “You do not know of what you speak . . . yet, nevertheless, the future of Clistris as of the Shadow is on the knees of the gods and we shall see,” he said with the dour fatalism of his type.

“And Spindicus is also to go,” he said shaking that human spider by his giant shoulder “ . . . and that is one reason why I fear. What want they of you and Spindicus together ? ”

Now this man-monster Spindicus had served me an ugly turn once or twice, for he alone of all my fellow gladiators seemed to harbour malice against me. He had tripped me up with a back heel I had never before seen, and when I had sprung up to do to him what should be done he had snarled in that queer toothless way he had and had put his hand to his belt where his poisoned darts lay which he blew out of the long pipe he carried in the arena and the touch of which was death as I well knew. But I, ever wary, did but laugh to pretend it was a joke and so Spindicus had gone away still snarling.

This had happened twice or thrice until it seemed to me that there was method in his madness . . . and yet I could not imagine who would wish to do me an injury,

only that in Rome none knew who was friend or enemy, for it was as full of intrigues as a nest of cockatrices is full of poison.

At last I was dressed and armed with sword and shield and the great war pipes as I had been commanded and was on my way to the Palace with Spindicus, who said nothing as we walked through the moonlight but hugged his darts to his waist as was his way with his web over his shoulder.

We saw the great palace set high above us with its white terraced walls glowing softly in the Roman night under the wide braziers of charcoal and oil that burned before its portals. Ever and again the sound of music would come to our ears fitful on the breezes of the summer night. And then would follow the sounds of a great shouting—perhaps from where Nero's guests caroused, for this was one of the banquets that followed the Games.

We passed the outer courtyard with its guards who held themselves like statues, whilst from the distance came the sound of a trumpet to signal the changing of the guard. And in one place we passed three lions chained to one of the marble columns, but whether as watch dogs or for sport I could not say. A tiger snarled in one place in the shadow with on each side, holding him in, a line of guards, to each man a line perhaps the length of a tall man which held the mouthing brute impotent in the middle. Then we had reached the inner court.

As we drew nearer the centre of the Palace and passed the guards, who saluted with the free Roman gesture of the right hand across the breast and flung outwards as the imperial emblem was shown and the pass-word

was given, the sounds of music grew stronger and with them the shouting of the guests. I knew very well that these banquets were like the Saturnalias where men and noble women went mad to prostitute themselves for that short season even to the slaves. But I, I, Shadow of Cuchullin, saw these things and held myself aloof.

Nor was it that the soft flesh of women, the dainty dish of Rome, did not call to me, as I have said elsewhere. It called, but I would not—partly for pride of race and partly because I knew that that way lay the path to weakness but not to glory—that path to glory which we sons of Éirinn call Death. Nor did the men of Rome understand this and so they accused me of impotency and called me sometimes eunuch—but when they said it they lied and sometimes they died.

Now as we stood outside the heavy curtains that ran upwards for the height of half a dozen elephants, those curtains woven for Nero from one piece and brought it was said from the looms of Hind, I heard the drunken shouting of the guests and the smash of cymbals and the swish of the skirts of the dancing girls inside. There came through the heavy folds the sodden smell of foods and the hissing of the scented water with which the slaves purified the heavy air and the scent of musk from the turning skirts. Of all these things had I heard but never seen until now, although the price of seeing might easily be death, slow-tortured or sudden.

And then, as it seemed without interval, I was standing inside the curtains to look upon the wondrous sight that the eye of man will never see again, although these twentieth century eyes of mine have seen it.

Before me, stretched the imperial banquetting chamber with its three great tables, more like long platforms than

tables, running into the distance. Around each of these tables, lolled men and women upon the marble benches, skin-covered with lion and tiger and panther, scarcely touching the meats offered to them by the slaves whose bodies from a deep black to pale jade gleamed dully under the light of the waxed and scented torches. But much of the illumination came from above, from hidden lights, the secret of which I know not but which I have heard the Romans learned from the Greeks, lights set on the ledge underneath the ceiling, a soft and steady glow. And it has often come to me, looking upon the hard garish electric light of this present life of mine, how little man has advanced and how much he has lost with the coming of the machine. But here is not the place to speak of these things.

Over the body of the great hall, the confines of which no man could see, hung a light haze coming from the resined torches and perhaps from the steaming bodies of those voluptuaries. The men sat in togas with the forearms bare and mostly shaven, for the shaving of the forearm was the latest mode in Rome. And some of them had the hair done in the new way long and low on the neck and not square to the nape as was my own and which has seemed to me the only manly way for a man to wear the hair. They were scented, especially the men, and some of their faces were painted with what the beauty doctors of Rome called "the Bloom of Olympus"—much indeed as the modern European "blood" paints his face and wears long his hair. All is as it was and perhaps will be until the day when man will burst the envelope of the body that holds him to the jealous earth-Mother.

On my entrance, those nearest the curtains stared at

my great height—and so the curiosity ran as curiosity will, and those farther off began also to stare until the hundreds seated at the three tables were all silent and staring save where at the centre table a fat young nobleman declaimed his latest verses.

But even he, already a-drunken, stopped paralysed amidst that silence as he looked upon the face upon the raised dais at the head of the hall, which looked simperingly down the body of the hall straight to where I stood by the curtains. Behind it, a garland of harpists who now and again plucked the cords of their instruments in fulsome approval of some silly saying of their master.

I do not think I can describe that face which at once terrified and charmed the Roman world. It was globular at this time, with a small sickly curved mouth, although once, as old Lupus had told me, it had been young and fair and as he said, “like the young Bacchus, beautiful as the morning sun.” But now it was glaucous and glistening and the vermilion with which it was smeared made it terrifying as that of some painted masque.

The eyes, once they told me deep-set and large, now cunning and set deeply in the folds of the head like those of a swine, stared at me, I say, as I stood there the full of my height as though I did not know it. For I would not admit it for the honour of Ireland and of my gods. It was not for nothing we would say in Connemara when we went out to fight that: *Er son Éirinn do bhióimair bailighthe*. “For the sake of Ireland were we gathered.”

But for all my feigning, I could not but feel rather than see, for I would not look at her directly, the figure

which sat under Nero's lee with the sudden oblique glance behind the veil of the hair that fell over the eyes. It was the lady Deeshie.

Then the bulbous figure had crooked a finger towards me and I had marched the length of the tables, helm and sword in hand, my long shield hanging straight on my right arm, with the pipes lying in the crook of it.

But as I advanced I was conscious of a stiffening of those about me. For I did not know that at that moment my life hung upon a very slender thread and that there was not in all that great assembly one who would have given three drachmas for it.

For it was death to carry arms into Cæsar's presence and my guides, who would have taken my sword and shield, had stepped back as I began my advance. Behind me, they stared, fearing to move without the imperial word, and not knowing what to do, but waiting the command which did not come. For it was also death to do anything which Cæsar had not commanded, and so, fearing, they watched my solitary advance.

As I passed up by the centre board, I could feel that astonished silence, and if I had not been the Shadow I also would have felt afraid. But instead, I bore myself high-stomached enough and I only wish that the little Dark Man could have seen me. But he was in Éirinn and Éirinn was very far away.

But when I had drawn near the presence, still unwitting of my offence, I flung my sword above my helm as is the way of the fighting Gael and looked into the eyes of Cæsar, who lolled and simpered, for there were those who said that Nero had been touched by the finger

of the gods, although none dared to say it to his face. But there was terror in the simper.

"Ho-ho!" he laughed and then the laugh had run out into that silly simper of "He-he-he-he. A man indeed. What say you, Antoninus?" he said turning to a bloated young nobleman who sat at the board beneath. But I, I stared at him hard but not with offence, for why should I offend a man who could have me flung to the fishes within the moment? But I looked at him steadily enough.

"And the blue eye of him. Dark as the sea of Galilee. And the nose of victory. Hear, Clistris. How would you like to go down into the arena with the Celt?"

I swear I had not seen him before, but as Nero spoke, I saw Clistris crouching by his side with his stinging brown eyes and the curious protuberance at the back of his head. But the body was a model for any sculptor in Rome—one for the great Praxiteles himself.

He lolled there as became a favourite of the Cæsar, with the woman he loved on the other side—for these two were Cæsar's favourites after he had killed his wife.

But he did not reply, and so Cæsar went on though now he had dropped his simper, as he well knew how to do, and he was Imperial Cæsar.

"How do they call you?" he asked me. And then I knew from that question that for some strange reason I had found favour in the imperial eyes, for it was a tremendous concession from the master of millions to a poor gladiator to ask his name.

"I am known, Cæsar, as the Shadow of Cuchullin," I answered proudly.

"And why 'Shadow?'" he had asked.

"Because I am the only man in Éirinn with whom he fought and for whom he had to show his last trick," I said. "Nor could he have beaten me without it, for we had fought from the rising until the going down of the sun."

"And what was that trick, gladiator?" he asked.

"That I can only reveal in the arena," I said. "For it is *geas* to tell it except in combat."

But Nero's brows had knitted under their laurel wreath, which had slipped a little to one side. "I do not ask my slaves to do things which they refuse," he said. And he began to simper—the deadly simper which meant death. And those there held their breath, for they knew what it portended. And I also, for had not Lupus warned me? : "Beware when he simpers."

"And I, I am an Irish warrior and I cannot tell you Sire," I said. "For I tell you it is *geas* to tell and none of my race has ever broken *geassa*. It is death to the soul to do so."

"It will mean death to the body," said Nero, as his choir of harps struck their chords in fawning approval of his retort, and he smiled a little. But whether he had forgiven me or not how could I say?

"And this 'soul.' Are you a Christian?"

"I am not a Christian nor a follower of the White Christ, whom I do not despise but whose milk and white followers I do," I answered. "But I know of the soul."

"Who has taught you?" asked Nero. And now he was curious as the child he could be at times.

"My mother, the lady Deirdre," I said. "And indeed all of my countrymen know of the soul which

never dies. Our Druid priests have told us of it in the sacred groves."

"And so you are a noble born?" said the Cæsar. "Well, shall I forgive him his *geas* this time? Shall I?" And he looked at the lady Deeshie by his side. But as for that slant-eyed beauty, she answered indifferently enough; "What is it to mewhat you do with this gladiator? There are hundreds of his kind." Yet, as it seemed to me, she had overdone it.

"Not of this kind," said Cæsar. "No man in Rome can look this man in the face. And what a torso—like a fan slanting to the narrow hip and buttock. And what arms! long as masts and legs fleet as the legs of my stallions." And he looked at me. And I also looked at him.

But I stood there disdainful enough of the lady Deeshie and knew that she felt it. And once that unsmiling Clistris, watching me narrowly, gave what he meant for a laugh—as though his face had been glass and he had broken it.

"And they tell me that you play on the pipes like Pan—playing that makes men mad—some even say you are a sorcerer. Play now for Cæsar who himself has the divine gift of music from Apollo, his kinsman," said Nero, smiling graciously, and as the gods are my witness there could be sunlight in his smile.

"I will that, Cæsar," said I.

With that, I dropped helm and shield to take up the pipes and with the red mane shaking on me and my kilt swinging under the smouldering torches, I began my march up and down between the tables with the pipes in full blast, and me playing "The Little Red Fox" and it with the joy of life and of death running through it

with shining eyes and brush outstretched like Moddereroo himself. And some of those that were there tried to sing and even to dance to the tune, with glazing eyes and lapping ears, with Cæsar himself swaying his fat body to the lilt and the two eyes of him now popping out of his head like a crab's.

But it was the lady Deeshie that was the sight and she out of herself, for from where she lay under Cæsar's shoulder she watched out at me as I walked the length of the tables, the dear eyes of her set on the pipes as though she drew from them her life and she as steady as the mermaid on a rock I once saw under the lea of Inisbofin, looking into the eye of the westering sun.

Never had there been such a piping since the wolf bitch suckled Romulus and Remus in the shadow of the Seven Hills. Wasn't I intoxicated with it myself? Never was there such a piping. And to this piping there was the great finish for us. For as I swept around and about Lady out of the Sea like a tide running about a rock, the little thing had leapt up at me to throw her arms about my neck and to kiss me full on the lips from which the pipes had fallen away in my astonishment, and then had fallen back again whilst the company shouted as was their way. But I, the devil was in me, and so I swept on heedless that I had been honoured more than any man in Rome—For I—I—in that moment was a god—exalted above the lady Deeshie and all the world.

"The lady Deeshie told me what you did to her slave as we sat at the banquet," said Nero when I had made an end of my piping. "Now you shall make some sport for us. How would you like to fight a spider, Shadow? A spider with a web?"

“And a sting,” said Clistris quietly.

“No, not with a sting,” the Cæsar answered. “The web only. Under these lights and in this place his poison barbs might sight a gladiator and find a god.” Once more the approving strings were struck, for all the world knew that Nero believed himself to be Bacchus come to earth.

“Oh!” came from the lady Deeshie, who seemed suddenly to waken into life in the dear way that she had. And then she had quickly added, “And his sword?”

“Oh yes, and of course his sword,” said Nero. “The sword against the net is fair.”

“Not so,” said Clistris. “It would be the sending of an unarmed man against an armed. The spider-man would have but his bare claws.”

“And what claws,” said Nero. “Did you see how he tore the throat out of the Scythian swordsman in the arena as a thirsty man tears the pith from the rind of a melon, after the Scythian had vainly fired all his poisoned darts?”

“Yes, yes, Sire,” said the lady Deeshie, but now indifferently enough. “The sword of course. Otherwise it would be murder.”

“Bring Spindicus,” said the Cæsar. And the spider-man stood before us. But as I heard the name my blood ran a little cooler in my veins, for the clutch of this Ausean monster was a nightmare, and I had seen him use it on the Scythian.

Spindicus stood before us, a terrible picture of a man, his gaunt frame slightly hunched, his ribs showing like those of a fasting man with the long spidery arms and legs he would wind round his opponents, and the matted

hair and beard of the little head from out of which two fiery eyes gleamed.

"This Celt could not fight him without his sword," said the lady Deeshie, as she gazed upon this apparition.

But this was too much for me, who more than once nearly threw away life for a boast.

"Oh, indeed, but I will!" I said, and as I said it, I threw down my sword and shield. Yet even in that moment I did not want to kill this mis-shapen creature—but I knew that I had either to kill or be killed.

At a signal from Cæsar the slaves had cleared a great space between the tables, upon which and the benches the men and women there climbed to see this strange duel—something after their own evil hearts and twisted imaginations.

But though I had thrown down my sword and shield with such a brave gesture, I did it of forethought and calculation. Which indeed has always been the way of my countrymen, who 'neath the frankness of a laugh hide a weasel cunning. For I knew that sword and shield would be little use against such a man as Spindicus, whom I had seen fighting, knowing full well that in an enclosed space I could not hope to escape his net when weighted with armour. For his net was not the long slender pouch of the retiarius but like a spider's web circular and with a short running rope so that there was no time to escape from it or to see it flying through the air as one saw that of the retiarii.

In a moment I had shed my greaves, my arm mail and even the helm, leaving my hair unbound. And then I had taken from my waist where it was concealed the silver fillet with which I always held it bound, and as the onlookers shook with a laughter now

freed from the displeasure of Cæsar as they viewed my preparations, I carefully bound my hair. But this also I did of forethought, for I knew that flying hair in eye would not help me in what was coming.

Spindicus, on his part, had yielded his darts so that he had but net and claw. The wagers ran furiously from side to side of the hall, for in old Rome a man could lose the estates of a line of ancestors on a throw of the dice, and they betted everything except life itself, for that was Cæsar's own.

"My twelve Nubian lions against your white stallion!" shouted the bloated Antoninus whose spatula still lay to his hand where he had used it to vomit when gorged, so to make room for more food, as was the pleasant custom in imperial Rome.

"A thousand pieces of gold on the Celt!" shouted another. And even the women were wagering, their lovers and even their bodies, for the Roman woman was as perverse as her lord. But through it all the lady Deeshie crouched there silently, and I could feel the jade of her eyes set upon me from behind the veil of her hair which she had shaken over her face as was her way. But of her I would not think now.

As a trumpet of silver rang out for the opening, the spider-man crouched there before me, his circular net swinging now over his back and now before him. And I watched not his net but his hand as Lupus had taught me. Twice he swung it and feinted to let go and twice he held it, but I did not retreat nor move and so lose my strength and let him take me off my guard. And then he had reversed the swinging motion and had swung it underneath the arm and had let it float out in a great dark cloud over my head. But I

had seen the finger slip it and had sprung just out of reach.

He had drawn it back again as though for another throw but even as he drew it he sprang forward and ere I could slip him by the sidestep which I had perfected, he was on me, had leaped for my throat and had sought to fasten his talons with their long nails in my weazand.

He had not reckoned, however, with my long arm, which met him full as a ripe beet with the heel of my hand as he sprang, so that he fell off to one side. But I, still unnerved by the sudden assault, went after him and was kicking furiously at his head to crush it as though it had been that of some noxious crawling thing.

But he had scrambled away just like the great tarantula I had seen in Cæsar's gardens, and for all my reach, had gotten beyond me.

Again we circled about each other whilst the crowd shouted, and now he had put his net away to let it hang at his waist. For this Spindicus was a creature of wile. And now I watched him more narrowly than ever, for I feared some hidden trick.

And then he had launched himself upon his face and was scrabbling like a great spider over the floor to clutch at my feet. He had got inside my guard and although I broke one of his ribs with my kick as he came in, he had clutched the other leg and was clambering up the height of me inside my arms to fasten his claws around my throat. He had begun to bite at my jugular and I knew if once he fastened, there would be no more piping for Cæsar or for anybody, and, indeed, I would have fought half a dozen Tauros rather than have faced this thing, with its body of animal and brain of a man.

In vain I tried to wrench him from his hold, but now he had clasped his long sinewy legs about my middle to lock them behind me in his dreaded scissors hold, and he was fastened to me like a limpet on a rock and had shut his teeth in my neck under the ear. It was in this moment when the blood thundered in my ears and the lights began to burn low and swing dizzy about me, that I remembered the trick I had learned under the hill of Tara from MacDuff the wrestler and the Champion of Ireland, a man nearly as tall as myself, for only a long-limbed man could perform this trick.

And so I had reached up under his armpit with my right arm and had passed the hollow of my palm back under his hairy throat, and with the resistless leverage I was able to use had torn his head away from my throat and forced it slowly backward, whilst still he clung with claw and fang to my body and neck. Back and back it came, he still gripping me in blind instinct although his only chance was to let me go so that my leverage would fall away with his body. Back and back and then as the lady Deeshie had, as they told me afterwards, half risen in her seat, there was a snap like the breaking of a young tree that smacked through the hall and the clinging tearing thing had sagged limp about my body for me to fling it from me, a piece of my neck and shoulder still between the fierce teeth.

I had broken its neck.

I would not faint, but the torches began to dance around me. Around and around, and from the far away came the sound of great waters and distant shoutings and then I felt a face bending over me and it was my dear lady.

"Give him more water," she said, "and send for the leeches."

But all I said was: "With my bare hands . . . with my bare hands," for even in that moment I could not refrain from letting them know what a great piece of fighting I had made, for it is my experience that if you don't do these things yourself, no one will do them for you. And then I had risen and stood before Cæsar and had flung my right hand upwards in the greeting of the Gael and had said:

"Make me free from the arena, oh great Cæsar! Make me a free man. I am high born and the blood of warriors and kings is in my veins."

"Make him free, oh Cæsar!" came a voice from before me. It was the lady Deeshie, her eyes shining strangely.

And Cæsar, who delighted sometimes to show mercy so that, as I said before, his pitilessness might limn the stronger, made answer: "So be it, Lady out of the Sea," and he had paused a heart-beat to add: "that is, if he comes unscathed from Clistris. Then shall he be a free man and his life shall be yours to do with as you will."

As for me, I heard the approving sprawl of the harpists, and then I knew no more. For the first time in my life, I had fainted.

## THE ELEVENTH MEMORY

### THE SLAVES BREAK OUT

THE story of my fight with Spindicus and of the lady Deeshie's kiss had made me in Rome and for the moment, amidst that fickle brutal populace, the people's hero, and like other heroes, I despised the people even whilst I enjoyed the thing they gave. I stood high in Cæsar's favour and although my life was worth just the space of time between my fights, people came to flatter and to fawn on me. Those who to-day admire the power of Imperial Rome, do not pause to consider that it was built upon one thing—the suppression of the individual, and cemented with one thing—with the blood and agony of the individual. I know, for I have lived there.

Nor do those who live to-day understand the real reason for the persecution of the Christians, which had little to do with the religion they taught—for the Romans, in their way, were tolerant to a degree of a man's beliefs and of a man's gods—more tolerant than the little people whom I to-day see shut up in their theological bandboxes without perspective, and therefore without understanding. For they are without that terrible memory which is at once my blessing and my curse. To remember much is to understand much.

The Roman priests did not fear the Christian gods—what they feared was the idea behind them of humility and challenge—challenge of the brute force upon which the Roman, like all other empires, was founded. From the governors down to any little centurion, all knew that once the Roman crowds accepted these doctrines, even in the fickle way of crowds, that is in shreds and for the time, it meant the end of the Roman Empire. The persecution of the Christians was a political, not a religious, persecution—for the Roman knew, even as I a native of Éirinn knew and know, that all gods have some of the truth and that to quarrel with a man because he worshipped another sort of god than yourself was as foolish as to quarrel with a man because he liked melons and you did not. For each one of us makes God in his own image and according to his lights and we are all both right and wrong.

And I who am two men know all this, and being two men I flicker with memory from modern speech to that of the ancient times. For I have two tongues just as I have two souls, and yet these souls are one—are the central thing that once was the Shadow of Cuchullin.

I had not meant indeed to be seduced into such dissertation but that it helps to explain much of that which follows and especially the revolt of the slaves, and my own part in it, as that of the lady Deeshie and the noble Clistris.

Rome was builded upon the effort of slaves, and years before, even Aristotle, the sage, had said he could not conceive of civilisation or art without the help of slaves to do the heavy unthinking tasks, to leave free the blossom of thought for its flowering.

For Rome had not yet foreseen the Machine any more than those amongst whom I live to-day foresee their own slavery to the Machine, which already as it seems to me has mastered the Man, but which one day when man has attained the spiritual stature necessary to its control may set mankind free for its next task—the conquering and the victories of the intellect.

Nor could I, Shadow of Cuchullin, see such things at that time, for we men progress from life to life or go backwards, and the things I now know I did not know then. For here I speak as a man of to-day and not of two thousand years ago, when no such thoughts possessed me. I was very thoughtless in those days.

And again as I read all this it comes to me once more how much memory has made of me two men, for here I speak in the speech of to-day, and as I flicker from the past to the present and from the twentieth century to the first, so also does my speech and soul change, so that to-day I cannot be held accountable for the things I thought in Rome or the girl who lately stood in the archway of a London garden held to account for the wayward sweetness of a lady Deeshie.

All this will help to explain why I played the part I did in ~~the~~ Rising of the Slaves—so different from the part I now would play. And yet that I was not altogether wrong will also perhaps be made clear.

It was the month of August and the skies were a furnace out of whose brassy throat came the hot blasts of the African deserts.

The Roman nobles had retired to the hills to their country seats, as they would now be called, where they cooled their fevered heads and stomachs after the banquetings that had followed the Games. There

they drank their Falernian wine cooled by the snows of Olympus, for the Romans had learned the secret of cool wine—have I not said that there is nothing new under the sun? not even cool wine. There they ate their oysters fresh netted from the bays of the Roman Coast and watched their aquariums and played with their birds, for at this time many a young noble prided himself more upon having a tiger or a strange macaw for a friend than any human being, much as do to-day the idle women of fashion. So far had perversion gone in Rome.

Nero, for dark purposes of his own, refused to leave Rome despite the advices of his leeches, saying that his gods and especially Bacchus whom he favoured, had told him to stay. So he sweltered up there in the great palace whilst the slaves relieved one another as they swung their long fans above his heated carcass or carried the beakers of cool wine with which he sought to chill his fervent blood, only to augment its dolours.

And sometimes he would command the soothsayers and augurs to appear before him and to prophesy. And, like a child, when they predicted the things he did not wish to hear, he would have them driven from before his face and, indeed, would have had them lashed had he, Cæsar, not feared the wrath of their gods. For Nero was a religious man in his own way, and if it comes to that, how else can man be religious?

At other times, he would command to be brought to him the lute on which he loved to play. And here he would lie a-basking and the sweat pouring out of his hide, the imperial laurels upon his brow, giving forth the most dolorous sounds and turning his piggish

eyes that yet had something in them of genius, jewel that hides in such strange places, now this way, now that. And sometimes he would take the lute and tear the strings from it and cast it petulantly down.

But at others, he would be entranced and himself would entrance his hearers by playing like the great Bacchus himself, who, in old Rome, as I recall, was more than the god of wine and was the god of passion. He would declaim, for he had no singing voice, and improvise his beautiful verse, half speaking half moaning. And then, as he would say, the god would take possession of him and he would become as one transfigured. Nay, I swear I have myself seen a light shine from out that glaucous face neither of earth nor heaven—an interior light, for so close do lust and love and beastliness and beauty lie in this strange world, so close that I, Shadow of Cuchullin, have often thought that they all have the same father. Now I know that vice and virtue are the same stuff in their beginning but that it is we, the lightning conductors, who turn the passion-drive to light of heaven or flame of hell. But such thoughts are of to-day, not of two thousand years ago when “the Light of the World” as his followers hailed him, had but lately come amongst the dark hearts of men with his lantern, a light shining in the blackness.

With Nero stayed Clitris and the lady Deeshie, nor would he give them the freedom of the hills, for the fear was on the emperor, and in those moments he dared not be left alone. These two, so different, were his two favourites—a position of razor-edged danger, for the man in favour to-day might to-morrow be meat for the lions or the fighting fishes. Yet had

Nero never turned against the lady, who had a great power over him, greater than any man in Rome, where all sought her favour.

I did not have the way of the lady Deeshie then. I have not the way of her now. The girl I saw a while ago in the London garden and whom I shall meet again to-day or to-morrow or the next day is the same lady, but with a difference—the time-difference. The alchemy of her mind is still the same strange blend of the altogether gracious and the aspid and the wistful. The lady Deeshie of Nero's day was just this blend, but with a vein of cruelty not to be understood by a male.

That she could have her slaves cruelly torn by the lash I knew, and that for trifling faults—but that she herself, against all the canons of old Rome, could bind up their wounds afterwards with oil and cool linen, I also knew—and I knew as well that many of them welcomed the lash for the chance of the aftermath.

So there, at the time of the breaking out of the slaves, sat Nero with his soothsayers and lute, and on either side of him, these two loving and hating.

Now the slaves, drawn from all countries and of every race from black-hided Nubian to fair Caucasian, had felt the gall of the yoke through the ages. They had to endure burning suns and heart-breaking labour without hope to sweeten, at the end of it. It is true that under the *lex Romana*, so far as I am served by my memory, their lives were Rome's and not their masters, but in practice, for in Rome as elsewhere practice and law were often two different things, they were at their lord's mercy. The punishment for killing a slave was heavy, nevertheless slaves were killed. The

law against the misuse of slaves was strict, but slaves were misused. And if a slave died under the lash or iron, who was there to trouble about him? He was "but a slave," that term I have heard so often in Rome.

Rome was stripped of soldiers at this moment when Nero was prosecuting his war against the Gauls, who had rebelled—a long drawn out business and most bloody. There were only in Rome a handful of legionaries, a few cohorts, and *us*—that is, the gladiators, the most dangerous fighting men in Rome, each of them worth a hundred soldiers in hand to hand *mêlées*, though not in ordered fighting. For such is the contrariness of all things human, that although our bodies were only to make sport for the populace and our souls regarded as of no more account than those of beasts, Nero had no more faithful defenders in Rome. For him that we ought to have murdered we were willing to die. Him that blood-sated, we saluted before we slew one another in the arena, was to us a god. But not to me. Yet though I hated this man I admired him too.

We gladiators, unfreed from the suns of Rome, and acting as lifeguard of the emperor, were lounging in our school talking idly of the last great scandal of the palace, or of a new sandal lachet, or sometimes, more rarely, of our distant homes from which the imperial Power had torn us. Of two things we rarely spoke—of women and of fighting. Women meant little to the trained fighting-man, save in his earlier years, for as time went on he learned to do without woman-flesh as he became inured to the gospel of the arena: "continence; abstinence; penance." Dancing

girls were provided for the gladiators in the intervals of the games, it is true, but they played no more than a momentary part in their lives and were regarded more from the standpoint of hygiene than from that of love or romance. And indeed many of the older gladiators never gave them a thought and even would declare that long abstinence from women was needful to final conservation of power and endurance.

Nor of romance as we men of the twentieth century know it, was there any in Rome. Patrician or Plebeian, you took your woman, who was necessary for two things—to continue the race and to give pleasure. Yet I will say there was little of the married prostitution of our day blessed by holy church. Nor was love bought in Rome as in the streets of our modern city. For as it seems to me, this two thousand year-old me, everything has its compensation—and when mankind has one thing it does not have another. For to-day there is that tiny spiritual minority with a higher concept of life and love than any that have preceded them, growing out of the general rottenness. The truth always lies in extremes.

As for fighting, we fighting men never spoke of it. It was our trade and not to be discussed. Had we been noble amateurs, we would have mouthed it over as did Clistris and his fellows, though Clistris knew when to keep the tongue back in the throat. But as professional fighters, we fought because of need—we did not speak of it. It was that queer expression of to-day: "bad form," or as we said in Rome: "the thing no man speaks of."

It was into the middle of this idle talk and dicing and the playing with the counters which were the

forerunners of the cards of to-day, that the messenger came, winged with fear.

"Rise!" He called as he showed us the emblem. "The slaves have broken out and even now are at the palace gates. Rise!"

It was strange to see those great fellows move lithely to buckle on armour and take up shield and sword or to see the slingers feel for their pellet wallets and the retiarii take up long prodding trident and net—for each man took up the weapon he knew. And me they made leader because of my birth and, though it besecms me not to say so, perhaps more because of that quality to which all men must bow even in this age of so-called democracy—that quality of spirit which none may name, and which is more than noble blood. For why should I deny it with boastful modesty as do the English to-day? I was their spiritual superior and they knew it—and so I was their leader. Also, my fights with Tauro and Pulta and Spindicus had given me authority amongst them—that and the, to them, strange fact that I touched neither wine nor women.

"Lead us, oh Shadow of Cuchullin to the saving of our Emperor!" they cried. But they pronounced it "Coolan" instead of "Cu-hull-in" as it should be in the Erse. "And bring the pipes with you that their magic may give us courage and our enemies fear." For these simple gladiators believed there was magic in the pipes—and maybe they were not so simple after all.

Then I, wileful as became me, gave them counsel:

"We will not fight our way into the palace—but we will get in by guile, as befits comrades of the sword and net. Follow me, and do what I will tell you to

do when the time comes. But the man who does not do it will die here on my own sword." And I lifted my long blade and looked at them threateningly enough—whereupon one of them laughed, because I was a boy I think, so that I had to strike him with the heel of my hand in the mouth to bring him to a fitting sense of his condition and of the difference between us. Nor did this fellow, a great wrestler he was with a head like an ox, resent this. He wiped the blood away from his broken mouth, spat out a piece of tooth, and growled good-naturedly enough:

"Oh little Shadow of Cuchullin, I love thee!"

They loved me and I loved them, these gladiators, often great babies. Only Spindicus, the Spider-Man had hated me and he was dead. It was so—and that was right.

"Lead us, oh you Greek!" some of them cried, for sometimes they called me the Greek, I suppose because of my cunning.

So I led them out from the School of old Lupus with Lupus himself once more accoutred for the arena and limping at my side. "Oh little brother," he said admiringly, "how I love thee. And how the men love thee. In all this I see advantage to thee with the great Nero." But as for me, I pretended not to hear him and was very important in myself. But then, I of course had the great responsibility, not he.

Out we marched, and I at the head blowing wind in hell out of my pipes. And as we marched we saw the Romans scurrying hither and thither like a nest of ants when you have stamped among them. For curiosity and its twin, fear, were driving them out from their holes.

They were running "to see the fun," but also they feared. For the spectacle snared them as the taste of strong wine snares the drunkard.

But when they saw me marching at the head of that queer crowd of slingers and swordsmen and net-throwers they shouted again.

"Oh little Red Shadow!" they cried in the silly way that they had, a way yet that sent little happy shudders down my frame. "Oh little Red Shadow!" For that was their way of compliment and why should I deny it? It is just the same to-day in the American fights, when a champion enters the ring and the crowd, drunken and fickle as ever, shout "Oh you boy!"

But I walked past them with an upper lip set stiffly around the nozzle of the pipes as became me—for were they not Roman pot-bellies, dirt of the earth! On we marched, silently enough, our sandals leaving little trace of our passage. Up above us stood the palace and down at its feet there was a confused movement and the flash of spears and then in another moment we heard the cries.

We were fairly close upon them before, as the skirl of the pipes came to them, they turned, for one of my men to mutter, as the faces slewed round to gaze upon us: "But they swarm like bees and they will kill us with their bare hands because they are many and we few." But him I silenced.

And then two of the rearmost who had turned came running towards us.

"Use no weapon," I said to my men, letting the pipes drop from my mouth to sling them behind my back, "and keep your weapons down until I tell you."

As the two messengers came up to us they said : "What want ye—are ye with us or 'gainst us ?" But I, speaking them softly as was my wont, replied, "Maybe we are and maybe we are not. What do ye before the palace of Cæsar ?"

"We fight for our rights !" said one of them, a little cunning man with his head a little on one side—a Greek as I judged.

I heard a man say that two days ago at that meeting in Trafalgar Square. For Democracy always cries in the same voice—the strangled voice which yet has something in it of the voice of a god.

But I said again : "Tell us more, so that we may decide."

"The slaves are up and soon shall be masters in Rome," he said again, his head a little more on one side. And all the time there came to us the confused shouting and cries of the swarming wretches gathered there at the entrance of the palace, some of them armed with hatchets and bill-hooks and even with spades. But few of them had swords and spears and there was but a shield or two amongst them—altogether a piteous spectacle.

By now we had come up with the main body and there came to me the stink of the sweating bodies and the hoarse cries as out of the maws of wild beasts. And then I saw who was the leader.

It was that little man with his head on one side. He had the Greek blood in him as I could see, for the Greeks were at the bottom of every trouble in Rome, an intriguing, calculating people, after my own heart, and they the great politicians. Did they not twist the Christian religion itself to their own ends, telling

the slaves that the White Christ had come to save them from their Roman masters, whom they were to slay?

But when I saw that sweating crowd with their striped backs still raw from the lash and their broken cowed heads and great stiffened muscles, I swear it by Mannanaun that for one solitary instant I wavered and wished that I could have turned my men in with them to drag from out that palace the monster that sat crouching there like a great pig and thrown him to the mob upon whose agonies he battered, and then led my legions against that monstrous eructation that was Rome and the brute discipline hated by a free Celt. But I was not yet ready for that.

Then my brain began to work as was its way, and I thought of many things. But first of all of the lady Deeshie there within and what would happen to her if I led the sweating thousands into the palace. And also I knew that should we win the first onset of this battle against the palace guards, we should lose "in the long last," as we said in Éirinn. I hated the Roman master even as these poor wretches but I knew that they themselves were as incapable of government as of reason and that a night of orgie would be followed by a morrow of disaster. When I struck, it would be with the assuredness of success waiting behind the stroke, and not blind chance.

So I had made up my mind even as it wavered, although I did so with sorrow, for I knew what was coming. So I continued to speak them fair until my men, always keeping together as they had been told, gradually forced or found themselves forced up against the great gates of the palace held by a few guards. And now we were stretched across the gate with our

swordsmen in the rear rank as I had secretly passed the word through old Lupus, who slid from man to man carrying my behests. And then, standing high over the crowd with clarion voice I called to the guards to throw open the gates so that we might enter to defend the Cæsar. But they would not open, fearing a trick, nor would they have done so had it not been for my command to our rear ranks to face about against the maddened hordes now beginning to suspect us.

They, disciplined men, turned at the command. The crowd rushed upon their swords and threw at them great rocks and stabbed at them with spade and axe. And then as the guards of the gate saw that we were friends and not enemies, they had opened one of the great bronze doors a few inches so that our men might slip through one by one, and, as they entered, be disarmed, so that if it were a ruse they would be powerless to take the palace.

As they passed through, slinger and archer and net-thrower, the pressure of the shouting thousands became intolerable. But I, my sword cleaving now here, now there, into the ranks of the slaves, felt their hot stinking breaths in my face as I fought them off from the opening, for it would have been the great shame as leader had I not been the last through the gate. And now only two or three of my men remained outside, saving for the half a dozen who had gone down in that hand to hand fighting and whose bodies were now being trampled into mush.

At the last, there was but myself. The guards behind, fearing longer to keep open the gates, would have shut them and left me to the mercy of the mob, when I heard the cry of old Lupus: "Don't shut the

gates!" in agony for me, his beloved fighting man. "Do ye not know it is Cæsar's favourite whom ye would sacrifice to the slaves?"

But already I heard the grinding of the great chains which held and swung the gates and knew that soon I should see the high sun for the last time and so good-bye to my beautiful dream of empire and of love. Yet would I not die without a great fighting and so I fought, giving thrust and cut, and had even cleared a little space about me as the wretches moved back from the bite of my fang, which shot now here, now there, and against those unshielded wretches took a toll for every thrust.

And now I felt that great joy which comes to the happy warrior as I knew I was making the last fight of all and that soon I should rest on the lap of Fergus and all the Shining Ones in the Irish heaven.

I had given point in the manner that few Roman swordsmen used and had found the throat of a great blear-eyed slave and had met another that rushed with the flat of my shield so that he went down with his face smashed as he ran in, but for all that, I felt the life being pressed out of me, and turn I dared not.

The moment that I ceased to have play for my sword arm I knew I was finished and so I fought for the dear life, and I had wished in that moment that the Little Dark Man could have seen me. Had he been by my side we should have held them for many a long minute perhaps, and sometimes I felt that he was there under my shoulder thrusting with me—but it may have been that my mind was beginning to wander.

"Now Cuchullin, that fellow over there," I cried. "And now this one. Take care of the red man with

the spade." But even as I said it, protecting my ghostly comrade, a great rock struck my helm making the stars to come tumbling out of the blue sky. And now I was at the end and could even feel the hot breaths of the wretches as they pressed in upon me, when from over my head I heard a voice cry silvery: "Open the gates you cowards! Do ye not know that he is Cæsar's favourite?"

And then I heard the blessed grinding of the chains of the gates which had closed and the opening and the creaking of the great hinges. I had half-turned as a fierce devil with a head like a pole-cat struck at me with the axe he carried and which would have done my business had not one of the pipes on my back glanced the blow, and then I had fallen through the gates my length upon the flag-stones inside. And there was my dear lady looking at me as I picked myself up a little ashamed—for no man, and especially a man of my height, likes to strew his length on the ground like a baby.

But the lady Deeshie had turned away and left me to my work. But I never could understand that woman, and it was not that I, God knows, was not clever enough.

## THE TWELFTH MEMORY

### THE FIGHT IN THE PALACE

OF that work I will not speak although it is written in the annals of Rome and even now, when all my splendid boyish foolishness has been left behind these twenty centuries, I think it was good work and excellently planned.

For however curious it is now to think of it, for five long days and nights I was shut up in the palace of the Cæsars with Nero, the lady Deeshie and that man Clistris.

Of this man Clistris I can scarcely speak with certainty even now, for indeed, right to the end, I never knew him or the secret of his strange spirit. He was the cruellest man in Rome—but what a champion! He would have even made the great Cuchullin himself fight, although even he could not do more than make the Great Little Dark Man show him his last trick.

And what was to happen between him and me will be shown in its place. I will spare neither him nor myself in the thing that follows for I am always just, or think I am, and if you do not agree, that also will not put dust on my wings. I have always thanked the gods for my insolence. It is a great gift.

When I entered the presence of the Cæsar, this man

Clistris, with the lady Deeshie close to him, was lounging in the insolent way he had—not my sort of insolence—as though the distant shouting at the palace gates did not concern him and as if Rome, denuded of its soldiers, might not be his holocaust within the hour.

I had only time for a glance at him, for the fellow strangely interested me. I was still covered with blood and sweat and was still helmed, and in my hand I still held my sword.

Nero sat there, his face quite unterrified, and on his fat knees lay the lute upon which he had just been playing, whilst behind him was his bevy of harpists.

“You must hear my last strophe,” he said looking at me as I stood there. Then he had said the queer thing :

“You still have your sword, Shadow of Cuchullin,” he tittered.

“And it is still at your service, Sire,” I answered as I brought my right hand in the salute of the Gael above my head, for I knew how to *plaumbaush* the brute.

“Why is it that you salute me in that way ?” he asked.

“Because it is the salute of the free Gael,” I answered. “I cannot learn any other.”

“Take care, little Shadow,” he said, his little eyes glittering as I had seen in the eyes of mad beasts in the circus. “Do not play with Cæsar.”

“I do not play, Sire,” I answered. “I only say the thing which is.”

Cæsar struck a chord from his lute and then looked up in the way that he had, half cunning, half wistful :

“What are these gods of yours, oh Shadow, of which

I hear," he asked, "that they teach you not to fear. Are they the gods of the Christians?"

"No, Sire," I said. "But we Irish do not know how to be afraid," which, indeed, was a very great lie, as I knew. For I was frightened of Nero as I said it—but he was not to know that and what the mind does not know the heart does not grieve for, as the saying goes in our Country of the West.

"But where are your bagpipes?" he asked again. And then without waiting an answer he went on: "From the lady Deeshie here, I have heard how you have saved our imperial person, and I decree from now that you alone in Rome shall be allowed to bear arms in the presence of Cæsar." He paused. "And you, because you saved him that is Cæsar's gladiator, by causing the gates to be opened, may ask of me what you will," and he turned to the lady Deeshie by his side, who now said a most surprising thing:

"Give me this slave, Sire," she said. "Let his life be mine. His great body will ornament my house in the hills. Free him from the arena now." And she looked upon me as though I had been a stick or a stone, and with never the memory of that kiss, given so I supposed in insolent madness.

"What say you, gladiator?" asked Cæsar, striking again his lute.

But I, enraged at her calling me "slave," and prideful, made answer: "Indeed and I will not, for I am no slave, but free born and noble as any here in Rome, oh Cæsar! I prefer to fight in the arena and win my freedom as you have commanded. I am the slave of none, man or woman . . . save only of Cæsar," I added. For have I not said I was cunning in my own

way. I think it pleased him, for never have I seen any, emperor or churl, immune against the barb of flattery. And a poisoned barb it is.

"Listen to this ingrate," she said in a voice between laughing and crying and with angry lights in the jade eyes of her. "I save his worthless life and he will not even serve me."

"I will serve you and to the end, lady," I said. "But I will not be your slave."

"So let it be," said Nero. "Go back to the arena if we live through this. But you have not heard my latest strophe."

And he began without more ado, to play upon his lute and to half recite, half sing in the way that he had. All this, although the mob was now howling ever louder as they began to obtain the mastery.

Now whether he sang well or badly I know not, for at that moment there came a great shout and a soldier rushed in to say: "The outer gates are broken, Sire!"

"This is my work, oh Cæsar!" I said to Nero. "Have I leave to do what must be done?"

He looked at me doubtingly as he bit his lips in that undecided way of his, and even made an offer to strike his chords again. Then he had said: "I place the palace lifeguards under your orders. See that you bring them back to me. My life is yours."

"And mine," said the lady Deeshie looking up at me for one moment. She said it so simply, almost so humbly, that I stared at her. And then I had gone out.

The masters of the catapults were at their stations with the slings drawn back and the huge pieces of

rock within the jaws of these machines, which, as I knew, could fling their burdens twice the length of a bow shot.

I did not understand their management and because I was wise in my generation, did not attempt to interfere with them, for every man to his own ass. But as I was now Captain of the Lifeguard and not ignorant of the art of battle, which I had learned at the feet of my father, the King of Connacht, I told them to reserve their fire until I gave the word.

The Roman discipline held. Although I, a strippling, at the fancy of Nero had been placed over men grizzled in the art of war, none there complained but obeyed. And, indeed, if it comes to that, no man need have had shame to obey me. For I was a warrior born, with a free intelligence, not that of a soldier, for no soldier is ever a free man.

The gates of massive bronze were trembling in the morning sun under the butting of the great ram which the slaves had brought up and which they were working under the directions of the little Greek, as I reached the top of the wall. They had formed a sort of testudo of pieces of wood and steel, as they had seen the Roman legions do, to protect the rammers so that the archers on the walls could not pick them off. But ever and anon they exposed themselves for a winged moment.

"It was here that I placed a slinger of a skill only inferior to that Pulta whom I had killed and who was his brother, whom men called Pityus, with orders to pick off the captain of the ram, a giant slave who urged on the men with voice and hand. He stood a little behind and at the side of the nose of the ram and sometimes his head showed above the shield which

they had tied with thongs to the end. I saw Pityus twirl his sling in the sunlight as he clung to his perch high up on the wall where alone he could sight the head of the man and from where the wall jutted out, and then I saw the slave flick his ear impatiently with his hand as though he had been stung. And indeed he must have thought that the pellet of the unseen slinger was one of those boomers or cockchafers of the morning which flew past with just the ping of a slinger's pellet, for in the heat of that struggle he would scarcely think otherwise.

And now the great ram was smashing the gates to pulp and the pounding came like the report of a great drum. It was an ominous booming and within half a dozen smashes the gates would be down, when from where I watched, I saw the captain of the ram put his hand up carelessly enough to his forehead to a tiny spot that showed itself there and then he had crashed downwards.

It was so sudden and in a way so terrifying, this death of a giant at the hands of a little slinger no bigger than an ape and from a tiny pellet of clay no bigger than a child's marble, that I, who had often watched the slingers in the circus, wondered again. For indeed the battle between Goliath and David of which some Jews had told me in Rome was a combat most unfair, with poor Goliath having no more chance than a baby against his young opponent. For David the slinger could always reach his man from the distance and only when he had to come close could his adversary deal with him. And the slinger was even more dangerous than the archer, for the arrow you could see, but not the pellet.

At the little man who had done this, I looked in a sort of fearful admiration, for I knew that one day I should have to meet even a more dangerous fighter than he, now that I had elected to go down into the arena rather than be the slave of the lady Deeshie, her that I would have served to the end had she not called me "slave." For indeed I had begun to think may be more than was good for me of this young woman, who at once irritated and interested me. She had begun to arouse my curiosity and that is always fatal with a woman or with a man like myself, who like all my countrymen, was, indeed, half a woman.

*Thurman*

*Bhan*

## THE THIRTEENTH MEMORY

### HOW THE LADY DEESHIE AND I HELD THE GATE

WITH the fall of their captain, the rammers wavered and broke a little to either side of the protecting shield, to let the slingers in waiting get to work with their pellets. And many of the rammers fell their length in the roadway ere it came to them that death was singing in the sunlight. The pellets rushed through the air like angry wasps to sting and sting again.

But the Greek who was in command was of an admirable cunning, and, seeing that the gates were already breaking, he himself took charge of the ram and commanded them to bring up an extra ram, first forming about the head of each a *testudo* that was impenetrable to Pityus or the other slingers, whose pellets sang harmlessly into powder from off the mail formed of the overlapping plates. As for himself, the wileful Greek kept his body sheltered behind the rest or lay down behind the corpses of those who had fallen and from that lowly position did give his orders.

Seeing the gates giving way under the booming of the twin rams, the captain of the guard ere I could hinder, had launched the palace guards across the outer courtyard to meet the maddened horde now forcing their bodies through the gaping fissures. As they crowded about the gate my men took heavy

toll of them with boiling lead and falling rock, and as they felt the lead they screamed again down there in that pit of pain where men's brains sizzled under the melting fire. Nor could they have retreated had they wished, with the pressure of hundred thousand bodies behind them to drive them on.

In the beginning, I hated having to do this thing, but later, my blood being up, I slew the wretches without pity.

Now this falling of the leaden torrent but nerved them to greater effort, which I, seeing, commanded the stopping of the heated cauldrons, each swinging on its tripod, which we tipped over into them, with such a stench of burning flesh that but for the heat of battle it was not to be borne. Nor did the soldiers of the guard grumble at the seemingly senseless order, but like the automata they were, stood stolidly there under the Roman discipline. Yet had we not taken our toll without paying the price, for already on the wall there were stretched a good third of the wall-men.

But my order had come too late, for now the pressure upon the gates had become intolerable, until at last, amidst the howlings of the mob, those in front were forced through the jagged fissures of the bronze plates, leaving flesh and blood and even gut hanging there as they came through upon the swords of the remainder of the palace guard which had gathered inside. For there was no other entrance to Cæsar's palace of that day that could be stormed, because all the other entrances were narrow and not to be come at.

And now began a very pretty hand to hand battle between the handful of guards and those who crowded

in upon them. In vain did I command their officers to lead them back step by step to the narrow double gates of the inner courtyard to retrieve the fatal mistake of having launched them against the outside gate in the open, where the few could not hold the many. The thousands filled the great outer court to be now helplessly entangled with the few defenders, which, seeing, I left them to their fate and, whilst there yet was time, stealthily withdrew my men along the tops of the great walls until we had come above the portcullis of the inner court, the gates of which were three times the thickness of a man's body and very high and narrow. For here I knew there would be the great slaughter. Yet there, even in extremity and with only a couple of hundred of gladiators to hold the palace, I did leave upon the outer walls skilled fighting men to prevent their being scaled. But that mob did not think of scaling them nor had they the ladders or the crane baskets with which to do so, even had they willed it. And had they done so, the higher inner walls would yet have towered above them.

I knew that could we hold out until the going down of the sun that we should be saved, for already reinforcements would be on their way to Rome from the hills and each hour messengers had been despatched to hurry them. Some of these messengers were caught and most horribly tortured and two of them had even been crucified and had been propped up there before the gates in the burning sun where they hung, with heads falling and swollen tongues hanging from parched throats whilst the slaves did jeer at them.

But others had gone out, for the reward was great and refusal meant death safe and sure at the hands of

Nero. And so we watched the sun lift to its zenith and then begin its long sinking.

The messengers lolled on their crosses in the sunlight with their blackened faces. The soldiers fought and fell. The mob howled to high heaven and tore to pieces with their bare hands the remnants of the palace guards which had gone down into the courtyard to meet them. And still my comrades and myself, now few in number, held the inner gate and dealt down death upon these poor wretches whom, being in desperate strait, we slew without remorse.

It was this moment which the great Nero, poet and madman, chose to make his appearance, as upon a stage.

As I gave my orders, my head now uncovered, I heard from behind me the strains of a lute. There on the wall, walking up and down and declaiming to invisible auditors strode Nero, a figure of fat and of Fate, the laurels awry on his swelling forehead and in a fore-shortened toga in which he looked like the infant Bacchus, something at which gods but not men might laugh.

His eyes were cocked piggishly up to the brassy heavens, in which the sun was now beginning to sink, and still he declaimed from where he strode at the back of the platform made by the thick walls, where at first he could not be seen by the mob, which, first silent for a moment as though awed, howled again as that ridiculous figure came into view. Some of them even turned their backs, for such was the potency of Nero and of the imperial power. And there is a potency in kings more searching than steel.

At his side and a little behind, stood the lady Deeshie,

watching out at him with a look in her almond eyes like that of a blind woman, a look that might have spelled admiration or hatred, or anything but indifference. For one always felt in this woman that underneath her rare and splendid indifference, there might well lurk fire and worse than fire. And behind her again, with that strange sneering face, stood Clitris, as though all this was no concern of his.

Up and down strode the fat emperor, despite the protests of his guards, who dare not press their warnings too far. And the crowd, those of them that had rocks, cast them at him. But still he walked up and down as though the gods defended him, ignoring and as I think ignorant of the missiles which fell about him. A coward at ordinary times, a lioness defending her young recked less of danger than Nero when the madness was on him.

As I was gazing downwards, wondering to see the sun striking upon the sweating shining bodies and to see those bloody beaten faces uplifted in fear and hate towards their masters on the wall and heard the fearsome threats that burst from the hairy throats of the slaves as they told us what they would do to us when they had forced the inner gate, I saw something run aslant the sun like the wing of a great bird. And then I saw a long thin brown slave kicking in the sunlight as he was lifted a good score of feet off mother earth and saw that he had been taken like an eel in a net.

And following the line up, I saw Clitris himself standing on the top of the wall and hauling up the net with its capture hand over hand as a fisherman will haul in his catch, and when he had lifted the kick-

ing writhing slave a few feet higher, I saw him take a turn with the rope about a jutting stone that stood in that place and then reach for his trident and run it delicately enough into the side of the wretch, who howled as he felt the prongs. Then he had driven it through the wretch's throat with an exquisite skill and having drawn up the body had thrown it from the running net down into that *mêlée* which had stilled for a moment to watch the fishing of their comrade.

Then he had sent the net a-whistle in the air and had taken another slave—a fat round man he was as I remember, and him he spitted through his round paunch until the guts ran out. This he continued to do minute after minute until those below fearing the net began to move backwards. But first they tried to hold it, yet always it flicked above their heads with a skill extraordinary, flicked by a wrist as flexible as the neck of a snake, that flashing out hidden fangs, struck and struck again.

It was a beautiful piece of artistry, and I, looking on, little knew that I was watching something that one day might save me from death, of all of which I will tell in its own place.

There were Clistris's fangs a-flicker in the sunlight and ever and anon as the wretches beneath sprang to grip the net, he would turn it in the air out of their reach. And I, looking on, inheld, was all the time learning my lesson but with that darkened side of the mind which psychologists in these days when everything is given a name, call the subjective or unconscious mind. But I, not unlearned as men were in those days, for I had spoken of the great Socrates with the schoolmen, knew that there were those of

the old Romans who suspected the existence of this mind and called it their *dæmon*, a word that has been prostituted since then to mean "devil," but which then meant familiar spirit or "good angel" as we now would say. Sometimes, even, men like the great Socrates himself would say that they had seen this familiar in the fleshly body so to speak. But of that I will say nothing, although I know what I believe. For something has stood by me in the hot sand when my life hung on a hair and when blinded with agony and sweat it was not I that still fought on—but that Thing.

Soon the men had brought up fresh rocks so that Clistris could not stand there exposed on the wall. Yet he did stand there to the very last and with his brows knit, went on with his work as though the rocks were not falling about him. And when an arrow pierced his arm he never blenched but still wielded his net string without flinching. He was a man, was Clistris Superbus—though I hated him.

And whilst he threw, there stood the lady Deeshie looking from behind at him, her eyes set deep under her own knitted brows as though she were solving a chess problem. But what that problem might be, I do not know.

Yet it was she who bound up his arm and he, his cruel brown eyes fixed burningly on her, watched, and yet, again, as though it were not his flesh and blood but another's. He certainly was a man, was that Clistris. A cold and cruel devil.

"Now it is your turn to take his place on the outer edge," she had said to me, challengingly. But the lady Deeshie did not know me or my sort. I did not

answer her but went on with my work of commanding from behind as though she had not spoken.

But when I turned to look at her, standing there in the sunlight, her face had gone white. I suppose it was that she could not bear to be slighted and that by a common gladiator. As for me, I cared little what she felt or did not feel. In that moment, I was master both of myself and of her, a lord of life in one of those moments that come to all. For neither could I bear to be crossed, not even by the lady Deeshie, who over me had powers of life and death.

"You fear, gladiator," she had said, and then she had moved forward to the edge of the wall and stood there careless in full view of those below, who fell to sudden silence as they looked upon that girl standing there to dare them.

But if she thought to cow me by her daring she also made error. For no woman or man either had ever the power or the way to move me from a course once decided nor could I be challenged out of my calm. I was the son of an Irish king and I knew it, and even the lady Deeshie could not beat that.

So I stepped over to her where she stood there and said gravely, whilst they made ready again to shoot with their stones: "You must step back from here, lady, and now."

"Who are you that you dare to speak to me like that? I will have you whipped," she said.

"You may have me whipped on the outside but you cannot whip me inside," I said smiling a little to her.

Through all this Nero continued to play, and yet it seemed to me that he listened, too.

As for Clistris, he stood idly by, harking to all this in the cold sneering way that he had. And yet it came to me again that between these two there was going on a secret battle and that could he have seen the lady Deeshie that he loved, humiliated, he would have been glad. For in his own way, he hated her.

But now I was chilling at the nape of the neck and so I cared neither for the lady nor for Nero himself. And as the first arrow came over to pass through the fine stuff of her green dress—she often wore green and I loved her for it—I had reached out an arm and had lifted her by the stuff of her dress back from the wall. Now though the lady Deeshie was light as swansdown, yet was she not a baby and with that leverage it was a lift most excellent, as I meant it to be, for I would have both her and Clistris know that there was strength in my long muscles.

Only, when I had set her down in safety at the back of the wall, she stood there trembling—and now she was white to the lips.

For a slave to touch a patrician meant death, as I well knew, and knew also that in that moment I might have a minute's purchase of life or, again, I might not. But as I laid her down, Clistris surprised out of his calm, had come forward and had struck me across the face with his open palm and then had clapped his hands.

It was perhaps this which saved my life, for in that moment that cracked Nero threw down his lute and in an awful voice demanded :

“Who are you that you should give commands in the presence of Cæsar ?” he said and his white fat face worked in the sunlight.

Now all this melodrama was very ridiculous up there on the wall when none of our lives were worth more than the stretch of a summer's afternoon.

But I had lifted him as I had lifted the lady Deeshie and had run with him to the wall and had held him over as though he had been a child, and very helpless he must have looked as he dangled there in the sunlight over that sweating crowd, who looked up with gaping jaws only waiting for him to fall into their maw. For they hated Clistris because of his cruelties to his slaves.

But if you think that he-devil blenched even then, you would mistake him and his quality.

He fought like a trout at the end of a line and reached his hands up to break my hold, though to drop him meant dropping him to certain death. But he never spoke a word.

"Bring him back!" said Nero. And so I brought him back and set him down on the wall, where he sat down a-tremble—not with fear but with the rage. He could not speak as he lay there breathing as though from a race. Never have I seen a man in such a white fury. He was weak with it.

"Take him away," said Cæsar to two of the guards who had remained on the wall, "and do not let me look upon his face until I give my royal word." And so they led him away, half-leading half-supporting him, for he could not walk, his passion had left him so weak.

"And you, slave, you have laid your hand upon a patrician, and when the day's work is over then you shall die."

As for the lady Deeshie, the cause of all this, she

stood there looking from Nero to me and from me to Nero, but she said nothing.

“My life is yours, oh Cæsar! to do with as you will, but it was you who made me captain of the guard and so long as I am captain, all on this wall shall do my bidding even though I be but gladiator and slave. And as for laying hands on a patrician, that I have not done as I will make plain when this day’s work is over—that is if Cæsar and his slave are both alive at the end of the day.”

“You are a dangerous fellow, gladiator,” said Nero looking at me with that half cunning, half childish look which all feared. And he began to simper: “He-he-he-he.” Then he had picked up his lute and still strumming the strings had passed into the interior of the palace.

As for me, I knew that Nero would not forget his promise to kill me, nor would I have cared overmuch were it not for one thing of which I will not speak here—that, and because life was sweet in the tooth, for I was but twenty-three and at twenty-three all the world seems made of the singing and the apples and the gold, as the old Greeks had it. And, also, I meant to kill Clistris.

For all this had been but a play between the young Roman noble and myself—a play made for the girl on the wall, as young men will. We were really boasters, both of us, and it did make me angry and ashamed, as though I had been a child or a rustic lover to disport myself like a common gallant. And I with the blood of the Kings of Ireland in my veins. It was a common thing to do and I had been no better than Clistris in this, I had even been worse, for it was

not he that had held me over the wall but I him, nor could he have done so had he wished, I that weighed near two hundred and fifty of the English pounds of to-day, and he able to walk under my arm.

Now the sun was dropping fast and there were but two hours between then and the sundown which was the earliest that we could hope for the Appian Legion to arrive. The slaves themselves knew this full well from the lips of the messengers who had been intercepted and put to the torture and they also knew, from the same source, as we were afterwards to learn, that one of the messengers had got through their lines and that they had but two short hours in which to take the inner gate and with it the palace and Cæsar, the lady Deeshie, and Clistris whom they hated.

That Greek, with the invention of his race, had tried to piece some scaling ladders together from odd pieces of timber and rope, for when the outside soldiers had retreated into the Palace they, under the orders of their captains, had destroyed the few scaling ladders which there were at that time in Rome.

I will always think that this Greek believed that our handful of soldiers could not hold out and so made ready his ladders too late. He had under him over a hundred thousand desperate men, badly armed it is true, but with the determination that is born of fear, because, as they knew, there awaited each man there tortures unheard if he failed to capture the palace before sundown. And what those tortures might be, the three bodies of the crucified slaves, now black in the sun, told every man there.

And now the mob worked, death chill in its face,

and panted and struggled with the great ladders, crazily made on the moment, but yet serviceable.

And now, with the sun barely an hour from its quenching, the first of the ladders was set against the wall and as the slaves ran up it and it laden as a branch with its fruit, the remnants of my men, for there were but now a score of us left, set their poles against it and sent it crashing backwards. Which seeing, the Greek, whom we could see running in and out of the mass like a dog with his head low and fear in his eyes, ordered up half a dozen other ladders which he set at the same moment against the wall, seeing the scarcity of our numbers.

Twice we sent these backwards, but ever as my men ran up with their poles and exposed themselves, some slingers, as we afterwards learned recruited at this eleventh hour from the wild men of the hills, picked them off one by one. And now there remained to me but half a score on the wall and of these one was wounded to death and three others were more or less disabled and I wondered where Nero, if he himself survived, would get his gladiators for the next Games.

There on the wall, these men, already given over to death, fought and died in defence of their tyrant, for so was human nature two thousand years ago and still is when millions of men with no quarrel will line up at the bidding of the few who stand behind, drunk on the lust of blood and power. The only difference is that in that time men died by the hundred where now they die by the million.

Now the sun had but a short half hour for its rim to touch the horizon, as I gathered about me the five who remained after the last onset, under the howls

of the mob, who now saw us ready ripe to fall into their maw.

The sun was sinking a blood red and as the pellets of the hillmen began to sing about us and my men again began to drop despite the shield which we had set up before us, it seemed to me that afar off in the lull, ere they set up the ladder for the last assault there came, faintly, the sound of the Roman trumpets.

"Hark!" said the lady Deeshie, by my side and all forgetful of her anger of a moment before.

Again there seemed to steal to us the brassy sound of those trumpets which rung from sunset to sunrise across the world as the Romans boasted.

But the slaves had heard it, and now with fevered effort they set the last of their ladders, for the others had all been splintered, up against the wall over the gate.

And now Clartus and Spizza, the two last of my gladiators, had both fallen there on the wall and were turning in their death agony as the slaves made ready to run up the ladder. But they did not wait until it was properly in position and so even as they ran it overbalanced and fell amongst them so that it took some minutes again to raise it, for it was very heavy and clumsy. The sun was now just kissing the rim of the horizon as the great ladder came into position and reared itself like some formidable monster before us there in the reddened sunlight as the lady Deeshie and I, alone, stood on the wall. I with the blood and sweat running down from under my helm and a pellet flick through my right arm. We watched it, impotent to prevent, for though I was strong as

any half dozen Romans, yet could I not alone thrust it back with the weight of men upon it, for they had taken care to weight it with its human cargo before letting it rest against the wall.

And as I stood there looking sadly at the thing that we both faced but hot and happy that we had fought the great fight, with the glow of battle on my face, the lady had come over to me and had said :

“Gladiator, hold out your arm now, for me. Hold it out a little as you once said you would not.”

I stared at the lady, and she stared at me as though she would compel me to her will, but whether a whim to have her way or because something else lay behind I was not to know. Nor do I know now—for who should know Lady out of the Sea?

For I did as she bade and as she passed under my arm she stopped to pick up the sword which had fallen from the hand of the dying Clartus and, his shield in her hand, stood by me at the top of the wall.

And as she did so she saluted me and said with that faint irony : *Ave Cæsar ! morituri te salutant . . .*

And I, in my turn, towering over her there on the wall, also saluted her with my blade crimson in the dying sunlight and as the first of the slaves came up the ladder, barehanded and bareheaded, for in their blind rage and eagerness they had run up, some of them, without weapons, I met him with my sword, his fellow being most neatly spitted by the lady Deeshie. But now as they vomited over the top of the ladder with their slingers unable to use their pellets, as we were covered by the bodies of their comrades, we met them one by one, and one by one we picked them off and so made a great fight of it.

The sun was spinning redly in my eyes and for a moment I thought I had been wounded, but whether it was sun ray or blood that ran into my eyes, I did not know. And always by my side stood the lady of whose skill in arms I had heard, yet had scarce believed, and once, as there erupted over the top of the ladder a big slave armed with an axe which he threw at her I interposed my shield and caught it deftly enough but it had broken through the light weave of my shield and wounded me in the hand, so that I dropped the shield the fraction of a space. As I did so, a swordsman thrust at and would have pierced me but that the lady Deeshie flung her little body forward to take it partly on her sword blade, but not enough to save me scatheless, for as she turned it from my throat, it tore the length of her neck at the shoulder, and then had passed on by strange accident to do the same to my own.

And now there came to our ears as our strength began to seep from us the blast of the Roman bugles and the tramp of armed men. Again and again the torrent of human flesh poured upon us there on the top of the wall, now spattered by blood. Again, and yet again, the desperate wretches made an attempt to come over at us and to kill us, even though now they knew they were hemmed. And then the cries behind them told them that the first of the Roman legionaries had entered and so there began that great Slaughter of the Slaves, as it came to be known in the annals of Rome.

For the man who at that moment was coming over suddenly stopped to throw himself backwards as he heard the Roman bugles behind him and caught the

screams of the slaves as they felt the bite of the stabbing swords.

But the lady Deeshie lay at my feet with the blood running from the wound in her white neck where she had flung herself between the sword and me. And there they found us as they came up the wall.



## THE FOURTEENTH MEMORY

### THE FREEING OF THE SLAVES

NERO with the cruelty of his day, had set his royal will upon making such example of the revolted slaves that nevermore so long as Rome flung her imperial standards to the winds should a slave dream of revolt.

The Roman legionaries had taken the tens of thousands of slaves as they packed themselves in the great courtyard without discipline and had sent in some veteran cohorts through the outside gates, their shields overlapping, the sight of whom had stricken such terror into the hearts of the wretches that they, will-less, gave way under the discipline to which the mob ever returns upon the command of the master. So, in their terror, they had forced themselves back on their own comrades, and so, again, had cleared a space, upon the inside of the gates of the outer courtyard which the Roman engineers had cleared and closed within an unbelievably short space from the outside, thus trapping the slaves within the court.

To do this, they had to sacrifice the last remnant of their comrades who remained inside to hold the mob back from rushing the gates ere they closed, for, as the slaves saw the great bronze plates creaking into posi-

tion and trapping them, they surged backwards like wild beasts and began with their bare hands, and even with their teeth, for there was no room there to use their weapons, to tear the Roman cohorts to pieces. The Roman soldiers, in their turn, pressed back against the gates, could find no room for their sword-play and so a most lamentable scene ensued.

For the slaves went through and over the legionaries like tigers, biting with tooth and tearing with claw.

A few, however, were saved by ropes let down from the top of the wall. But to the end, these simple Roman soldiers fought knowing they could not escape, and the Roman discipline held.

Trapped, the soldiers were sent in long lines to cover the walls from where they slew at will by spear and arrow. The slingers passing along the walls gathered their harvest of death at leisure. And then, as fresh reinforcements arrived, the great catapults were levered over that pit of agony and spewed their rocks down into the mangled mass. To ease the pressure on the gates, against which the slaves hurled themselves vainly to leave behind blood and flesh on the bronze plates, the cauldrons of molten lead were brought up and tipped over into that steaming fury. And now there rose from the masses packed against the gates a most piteous howling as of wild beasts as the lead bit into back and brain.

Under that stream of fire, the crowd surged from the gates and then surged forward again. Twice, and twice again, came the backward and then forward surge until it seemed as though the great gates

must yield under the impact. And as they howled, the Roman trumpets rang out their orders from above until with the fresh divisions arriving it seemed that the whole place was ringed with avenging hosts.

I could see the Greek, knowing the day lost, trying to obliterate himself behind those others and, with sleuth, keeping in the background. I watched him as his eye roved up and down the walls, seeking a way of escape from something that would be worse than any death, the ingenious tortures that awaited him as leader.

I saw him pass behind the angle made by a buttress with the wall and, looking over, saw him remove his sandals and with great ingenuity climb up the angle of the rugged wall, foot by foot, crab-fashion, his toe nails clinging to the roughened masonry with his back to the angle, until the flesh of his back was raw as he clung with toe and heel to the roughened places of the stonework. And I, because I sometimes had the queer way with me, and was sorry, hoped for his escape.

He had worked his way up in this fashion nearly to the top of the wall, when I saw something float down from above just as the Greek had carefully released one foot and swung it outwards and upwards feeling for the next heel-hold, and catch the extended foot. The net was jerked upwards as the frightened Greek lost his hold to fall forward into the net, where he struggled like a great crab.

It was then on the top of the wall that I saw Clitris who seemingly had been watching the Greek all this time, and who must have been freed at the whim of Nero. I saw him tighten the running noose of

his net and take a turn with it around one of the projecting stones and there he left the Greek dangling 'twixt earth and heaven, as securely caught as though he were a crab caught in a crab pot. He looked upon him a moment with his brown eyes and there he left him dangling over that pit of horror. And there he was to hang five days and five nights calling for the death that did not come.

There died that day within the courtyard of Cæsar's palace two and thirty thousand slaves, the rest having yielded themselves. Of the sixty thousand that were left alive, many of them burned by the lead and oil and the Greek fire, ten thousand were chosen by lot, and Nero erected in a great circle about his palace ten thousand crosses. And as to these crosses, his soldiers hanged upon each of them a man, tied to the cross but with a nail driven through the crossed feet, which the leeches treated with ointments so that the men might not die too soon, and so cheat the justice of Cæsar. And each hour through the week that followed, the soldiers passed from slave to slave, holding sponges soaked in water and vinegar so that they might drink and live a little.

There they hung as the August sun came up each day out of the distance—hung until their tongues after the third or fourth day lolled blackened so that they could not again be drawn back behind the swollen lips. And there each day, their fellows, five and fifty thousand of them, were led under the guardianship of the Roman regiments to look upon them to learn the mercy of Cæsar.

And each night as I lay in the palace of Cæsar where I had been taken, sometimes to sing in the delirium

of my wound, sometimes with my darkness gone, there came to me that wailing like the sound of rushing seas upon pebbly strands, that reached its highest on the morning of the second day and then as the wretches passed into the place of dreams and death, silenced. And sometimes it would seem to me that it was the howling of wolves or of myself, and sometimes I thought that I had died and had passed over the Styx, as the Romans had it. But through it all I hated the Roman Imperium and I would that I had had it in my power to destroy all these bloody-minded wretches from Nero downwards and with it the Roman discipline, even as in this present life of mine in the twentieth century I have fought against other empires—for Empire is always the same thing but under a different name. It is the thing which gives order and standardization but which takes from life its very heart-beat—the thing that makes it separate.

The Roman mother-in-law gave roads and bridges but took freedom. She made order but destroyed the will, as though one should order the body into seeming fairness and leave the soul crippled within. For the hearts of all her stepchildren, hating and fearing, were forced to beat in unison with the imperial diastole and systole.

But it was a cruel age and the White Christ did bring something into the world it did not have before—he brought love. And I, who even now am not Christian but pagan, say that that was his justification. He came, he gave his message, and he was the rejected of men. His was the most colossal failure in history, but it was also the most colossal success,

for he wrung victory out of defeat and his message goes on despite his messengers. But here, it is the man of to-day speaking rather than the man of yesterday.

Pagan I was, yet could I not bear to see this ring of tortured and dying men, as the days and nights dragged on. But neither could I see the way in which to release them. Nero I could not move even could I gain access to the royal presence, for Nero had never yet shown mercy save when he did it to make background for his mercilessness. Nor dare he weaken in the face of the slaves, who to him as to Rome were but carrion—nor was I, Shadow of Cuchul-lin, other myself. For I did not forget that even if I had saved Cæsar I was still gladiator and slave, nor did I expect from him either pity or ruth, I myself being still under sentence of death for having laid hands on a patrician.

It was then that I bethought me of the lady Deeshie. She at least was a woman and it could be that she might be moved and so might move Nero, over whom she had more power than any human being in royal Rome.

But when I asked to see the lady Deeshie, I was told that she was sick of a fever from the wound in her neck and that the leeches had ordered that she should not be seen by any. But when I dared to insist and made my way about her slave Samba, partly by a present of one hundred drachmas of gold which I had obtained, it does not matter how, and partly by telling him that if he did not do my bidding he would be found one morning with his throat cut (I made at him a very terrible grimace as I said it, so

that his white eyes rolled again in terror in his ebony headpiece), I had my desire.

Now I know not why these slaves, who were nothing to me, should so have roused my interest, but even in those days my heart was always with the under dog, which I suppose came from my Irish blood, and which even in my present existence has brought so much trouble to me. But in those days men did things not of forethought but of instinct—and oft-times it seems to me that this is one of the differences between the men of old time and the men of to-day. Men to-day will call themselves democrats because they have thought about it, more often because they have first felt it and then thought. In those days men did not think so much as feel. Perhaps some day we shall have thought and feeling running together in double harness with the heels of the wind on them.

So it was that when I went to the lady Deeshie to beg, not for lives, but for deaths, the deaths of the wretches still surviving, for more than half of them were already dead of sunstroke and suffocation and the rest raved under the hot suns, I did so not because I was Plebeian, for that I was not, but because I knew these slaves had revolted against intolerable wrongs and that as torture and beatings were their daily portion in life it was shame because they had revolted against such wrongs, to give them also torture in death. My heart but not my arm was indeed with them and not with their masters and if I found myself that day upon the top of the wall instead of at its foot it was circumstance, not choice, that had led me there. That and the lady Deeshie. For I

well knew what her fate would have been had she fallen into their hands, and I would have burned Rome rather than she should have a moment's pain.

My lady lay there as I entered, stretched out upon her couch, with the long black strands of her hair spreading from her like an aureole, flowing upon cushions and couch, like a dead woman laid out for burial, her eyes closed and her face white. Yet was there a faint flush in the hollow ivory cheeks. By her side lay a dagger of slender steel, set in ivory like a bodkin, and it was this dagger which set my brain a-working.

I looked at her with wonder—the sort of wonder that in a man looking upon a woman makes the hair rise upon the nape of his neck and sends the chill stealing to his centres.

For then I was very innocent and I did not know what I later knew about this woman and myself.

When I told her why I had come she opened wide her eyes with their great dark circles about them so that I could see how sick she had been.

“I think I do not understand you, Shadow of Cuchullin,” she said, using my name for the first time and always using it from the moment she had saved my life on the wall.

And her eyes grew round in wonderment.

But when she knew what I would be at, she flushed high.

“You plead for base slaves,” she said, looking out at me from behind the veil of her hair. And in that moment I knew something of the quality of this woman,

something of her contradiction, which perhaps is the quality of all women.

"I plead against base torture," I said, and I looked down upon her.

"Hark at them!" I said holding up my hand. There was a silence and then through the open window at her head there came a moan and then another and then the air was tormented with a howl in chorus. But to all this she listened as though it did not concern her.

"Torture—why should they not suffer the torture?" she asked, again with that strange wonderment showing in her face as though she could not understand me.

"Because to torture is to be base oneself," I said, yet hardly knowing why I said it, for I was not then the same sort of man that I am now, and torture was then as much a part of life as the prison or the Games.

Again she stared upon me, and now her eyes were flaming in her head so that it was my turn to stare, nor had I any plumbline for the depths of this imperious wilful creature whom I myself had seen bind up the wounds of a slave whom she had just had whipped most cruelly.

"Harken to their cries," I said.

"I hear them," she said. "I have had the casements opened so that I might hear them. It is music in my ears. Those foul wretches who would have killed you, oh Shadow of Cuchullin."

She said my name with so much passion that I was all a-gape and could not for a moment reply.

"And yourself, noble lady?" I asked. "What of

yourself — why speak of me who am but a slave ? ”

“ And myself,” she returned with a great dignity. “ I did but speak of you because it was you who pleaded for these wretched slaves.”

“ I plead not for their lives, but for their deaths,” I returned. “ I only ask the right to put them out of their pain, and to send them on the path to glory, as we say in Ireland,” I went on. “ Ireland, where we do not torture men : men who have suffered unbearable wrong.” (Yet did we torture one another—but I say nothing about that.)

“ How can a slave suffer wrong ? ” she asked wonderingly. It was her philosophy—the philosophy of that day.

“ He is a human being, of like flesh and blood and spirit with you and me.” It was my declaration of faith, and for the first time I coupled her name with my own and noted the flush that followed this affront unpardonable. It was but a trial shaft, nor did I know whether she would have me whipped for it or what indeed she might do.

But she only looked at me with that oblique stare out of her jade eyes as though she saw things through me. And her flush, whether of anger or otherwise, I could not read.

“ Speak no more of this foolishness, for it cannot be.”

“ It can be and it shall be ! ” I said and I knit my brows, which, noting, she smiled a little—a faint ironic smile that trembled in her eyes and was gone. And it was ridiculous enough. For I was but a slave and she the most powerful lady in Rome. But she

did not know me nor did she know that I never broke my word to myself unless expediency demanded it—for I was not a fool.

“All men, even Irishmen, are touched at times by the finger of the gods. They have touched you, Shadow of Cuchullin, and I will forget it.”

“But I will not,” I said. And left it there.

“Have out all men from me,” she said, “save only the Shadow.”

The slaves vanished and we were alone together.

“Listen to me, oh Shadow,” she said, earnestly. “Bend down that proud head of yours.” There was something adorable about her as she said it, a sort of shining humility that I had never before seen in her.

“Listen to me. It is about the noble Clistris. Clistris means to kill you in the arena. Beware of him and of the double-cast. I say no more.”

I looked at her a moment and then asked: “I thank thee, oh lady, but what is the ‘double-cast’?”

“That I know not myself,” she answered. “But I know of it and I say to you, beware!”

“But what is my life to you, oh lady?” I asked still wondering.

“It is mine,” she said enigmatically. “I saved it on the wall.” And she smiled a little to me.

“And now leave me, for I am tired.”

I turned to go, when she spoke once more.

“But you never thanked me for saving your life, gladiator,” she said, and again she smiled. “And we are both scarred in the same place—” and she pointed to the scar that ran across the base of her neck and then to my own.

“When the same blade wounds two men in the

time when one of them seeks to save the other, it makes them blood-brothers in Éirinn, so that one does not thank the other for saving his life, for the life of each belongs to the other and they are one." A flush ran over her pale cheeks at my words. As for me, I added nothing, for I also knew when to be silent. For when you drive home the blade you do not thrust again if you be artist of death.

"You are a man of Éirinn most amazing," she said, "and I, also, do not thank you."

"But lady Deeshie, my life is yours," I said, "and now will you not speak to Nero and grant my request?"

"I will not," she said with that unyielding obstinacy of which I was to learn more. "And now leave me, for I am tired and would be alone."

I threw up my right hand to see her drop her eyes as though tired, and then had left her.

But when the lady Deeshie rose up in the morning, she found the circle of the survivors, those who had been kept alive by the soldiers, all hanging on their crosses with each of them punctured most neatly under the heart with only a drop of blood to show it, a very delicate piece of business. Nor will I say more, save that the night was very dark and moonless and the heat so terrible that the drowsing guards could scarcely stand up to make the rounds of which they made three every night. From cross to cross in their wide quadruple sweep about the palace walls the guard went and ever behind them on their heels stole the shadow of a man. And the man carried a reed and on the end of a reed a bodkin of the kind that Roman ladies used. Perhaps it was the dagger which

lay by the hand of the lady Deeshie and perhaps not, but only one thing I will say, a guard looking back saw a ghost and declared it was higher than any man in Rome.

I say no more. But you cannot keep the men of Eirinn down.

## THE FIFTEENTH MEMORY

### THE JUDGMENT OF CÆSAR

THE lady Deeshie lay in the shadow for two long months, for the sword had run its length across the base of her neck, only missing the great vein by a kiss. As for me, I remained in the palace upon Cæsar's command and was at that moment the envied of every man in Rome. Nor did those who envied know that he lives in peril who lives in kings' palaces nor realise how close I had come to death after the fight on the wall.

It was not the wound that had brought me close to death. Not that wound which the hand of the lady Deeshie had kept from my throat by throwing out her sword to stay the course of the blade and which had run along her own neck and then across mine as I stooped to avoid it, leaving upon both of us the same scar. It was Nero, himself.

For he had insisted that I should die because I had laid my hands upon a patrician. Was it not the law of Rome? He had told me in that half idiot way of his which might conceal either a very great foolishness or a malignant cunning, that it grieved him to sentence me and that he had hoped to see me free of the arenas after my next fight, but I had laid my hand on a patrician and the law was the law and so on. And he made cunning distinction between myself as the man who had

saved the palace and the man who had held first the lady Deeshie and then Clistris, the former by her robe and the latter by his toga. The first he wished to honour. The other he had to slay.

All this he outlined with the fine show of legal lore, before those who had collected to hear him give judgment, for he prided himself as jurist. And he screwed up his piggish eyes and struck one podgy hand into the other as he went into the fine points of my case, and the head of every argument carried its own tail—the approving chorus of the attendant harpists.

But when he had made an end, I lifted my right hand before all that assembly which hung like the sycophants they were upon his statement, saying at intervals: "True, oh Cæsar!" and with no more thought for me than if I had no existence. There was one fat man in particular, that Antoninus, who came in like a Greek chorus at intervals and whose paunch I watched, deciding exactly where and how I one day might slit it, for I could never abide fat men. Clistris, alone, remained silent, but his brown eyes set upon me seemed to bode no good.

It was then that I found aid where I least expected it, for just as Nero was about to deliver judgment, there came a voice almost from under his ear—a high thin voice with a noise in it like a creaking wheel. It was Clistris, who, in some way of his own, had managed to climb back to royal favour:

"Hear me, oh Cæsar!"

Nero looked at him and putting on the assumption of dignity that at such moments became him as well as the skin of the lion did the ass, said: "Speak on."

"I appeal to the Cæsar for the life of this man. It is my life. Give this man to me, oh Cæsar! for they say he is now the greatest swordsman in Rome and I would fain go down into the arena with him and test my skill."

"You live but for to dice with death," said Nero looking at him. "For this Shadow of Cuchullin is a champion of champions as you saw now in the fighting on the wall, and I would not have you go the short road yet to the gods, oh Clistris!" said Nero, teasingly.

"I fear neither the Shadow nor any of the men of your arenas, oh Cæsar!" said Clistris looking at him steadily and neither flushing nor paling, for this man had the great control. "And if I play with death it is for my own sport. He has put insult upon me and so I ask his life."

But Cæsar would not. He knitted up his eyes, like a dying pig, and shook his head, nor did even Clistris dare to go farther when Nero did that, for it was his final decision.

It was here that I thought the time had come for me to take a hand in the game for myself, and so I threw the weighted cube which all this time I had held in reserve and which I knew better than to put forward too early in the game.

"Hear me, oh Cæsar!" I said. "Hear me oh greatest of lawgivers, whose fame has passed to the remotest parts of the known world, even to my own native Éirinn."

Oh I knew how to appeal to this vain and foolish fat man, the fire of whose genius sometimes shone so disconcertingly through his foolishness. For it was not for nothing I had been born in Éirinn where all had

silver tongues and wily heads. Also, 'I knew that only my mother wit now could save me from the sword or the poison cup.

"Have I leave to speak, oh great lawgiver?" I asked again, "for in my nation a man condemned is always heard in his own defence. Is that not good law oh great jurist?" I asked again.

Cæsar nodded and I felt like a man on the scaffold who feels the rope loosen from about his neck.

"The Roman law runs that 'any slave who lays his hands upon the person of a Roman of noble birth against that person's will forfeits his life.' Is that not so, oh Cæsar?"

Again Cæsar nodded.

"Well, oh Cæsar, I appeal from Cæsar the judge to Cæsar the lawgiver."

I could see by the little glistening eyes that I had touched his vanity, but I also knew that I had to convince him, for this vain fool had pride of intellect too.

"I have not laid my hand upon the person either of the lady Deeshie or of the noble Clistris, as they themselves will say, for knowing the law I was most careful to lift them by their dress and not by their persons, so that my life is not forfeit. Also, I would fight the noble Clistris in the arena as the greatest retiarius the Games ever produced." And then I waited outwardly very cool and pale, but inwardly deadly frightened, for it was my last dice and I had no other to throw.

Cæsar sat there looking at me craftily out of his little eyes, and as though he pondered. "It is a point, a delicate point of law," he said. "I will consider it."

And he made a great show of balancing one thing against another whilst all there seemed to hang upon his next words, and not ungenerously, for there was perverse cruelty in these Roman patricians and this was a scene after their own corrupt hearts—one in which a man's life hung in the scales.

"I have to decide," said Nero at last, "between the letter and the spirit of the law. The letter frees you, the spirit does not, for the dress of a noble was certainly intended to be included as part of the person when the law was made." Here came the chorus of the harpists as though a god had spoken. And then I knew that I had lost and that it was good-bye to life and Éirinn and, yes, to the lady Deeshie who interested me as a puzzle will interest a child. And it seemed to me that it was this last which I regretted the most, which indeed I could not understand, for surely life must be dearer to a man than any woman. But that I did not stop to explain to myself. And then Nero had shown the bestial opening of his blue lips, shaped like a tiny Cupid's bow, and had continued:

"Yet if men be free to change the letter of the *lex Romana* at will so would that law become of no effect—and so, Shadow of Cuchullin, the letter of the law upholds you.

"And then, there is something else," said Cæsar in that mad cunning as he screwed his brows together until the laurel wreath lifted a little on his head. "But this is of the part of me that is divine and not human. For it is evident to me that Pan, to whom be all praise! has 'touched' the Hibernian with his finger and so he is like even to me. For his mad pipings and his unafraidness in the presence has told this to

me—and let no man touch the man upon whom the gods have laid their hands. And so, Shadow of Cuchul-lin,” said he, giving me my full title, “you are free.” At which the bevy of harpists sang all together in praise of the mercy of Cæsar, striking their chords the while, as that amazing effigy sat there complacent and receptive on his throne like some celestial fowl.

He said it with no more feeling than if I had been a rat.

“Also, you shall fight the noble Clistris. You, who have defeated Pulta the slinger. And as for you, Clistris, who are the light of my eyes, this is the last time you shall go down into the arena, and perhaps it may be the last . . .” said Cæsar, with slow unctuous cruelty.

Clistris raised his hand to his chest and swept it outwards in acknowledgment.

I must own that this man Clistris was a good sportsman for all that he was the cruellest man in Rome, where cruelty was the essential quality of life. And yet it comes to me that it was not so much sportsmanship as the desire to demonstrate his skill upon a foeman worthy of his trident—that and because I knew he hated me for my handling of him and perhaps for something else and that he wished to play with me. I knew that if he disabled me he would play with me by the hour, for under the law of the Games there was no limit to such things in the single combats.

## THE SIXTEENTH MEMORY

### THE SATURNALIA

AND now the time of the Saturnalia was upon Rome and the Mistress of the World was possessed of devils.

There are those to-day who laugh at "possession," not knowing that in it alone is the true explanation of all madness. I have seen that which I have seen, and there is much that the modern world has forgotten or is only slowly rediscovering—for there is nothing new under the sun. There are alienists, as they call the doctors of the mad to-day, who believe in "possession" but fear to acknowledge it, because science has its gods and its dogmas as well as religion, and the scientist is often but the priest disguised.

I had left the palace of Cæsar in the morning to go down to Lupus to speak with him of a new thrust which I had invented, and to ask his opinion of it. It was a pretty thrust with a corkscrew turn and, as it seemed to me, unstoppable to any guard known to man, although it was not that same thrust which I had hidden from all and of which I shall speak in its own place. But I was always eager and very sure of myself; and I had many disappointments.

As I passed along the streets, I could feel that something was stirring. Long lines of youths and even of old men went past, their brows decorated with flowers and wine-flacons in their hands, and as they went they threw their flowers high in the air and drank joyously together. There was one youth with the eyes of a goat who capered like a young centaur, before a long line of other youths, like himself scantily clothed. He had a leopard skin about his slim waist and around his pale young brows a chaplet of some red flower. And as he capered, he swung a silver goblet high in the air, whilst his companions shouted and sprang behind him like young goats.

Coming down from a side street, fluttered a bevy of young girls, clad also in the skins of beasts and with flowers twined in their hair. Some of them had small brass cymbals in their hands which they struck against each other until vibrant sound and flashing brass seemed to clang together in the sunlit air, to make sound and sight one. They also danced to the clash of the cymbals and behind, one of them, who might have been a boy, so beautiful was she, a slim olive-skinned fey, beat upon a drum. Tumpety-tumpety-tumpety-tump went the drum. Br-r-r-ang—br-r-r-r-ang went the cymbals. The bare feet of the sandalled girls twinkled in the golden sunlight. The hairy breasts of the youths heaved again and one could almost see the beating of their hearts through the transparent skins.

And as I looked, there came back to me the memories of the dead happy days of Éirinn when we Gaels met to feast the goddess Brigid before the Christian had set his heavy hand upon our light-hearted paganism.

For indeed we Irish had always been pagans at heart, with a thin veneer of Christianity :

Said Patrick to Usheen why won't you be good ?  
Said Usheen to Patrick : will you say why I should ?  
Said Patrick to Usheen : Oh Usheen ! Oh Usheen !  
Said Usheen to Patrick arrah husheen ! arrah husheen !

Not but what that Christ was the great man and the fine gentleman, and it is I that have the right to speak about him that nearly saw him with my own eyes—but the Christ that loved beauty and joy was a pagan himself. Which is a hard saying, indeed.

It was when I saw the young boy dancing in the sunlight with the red flowers swaying above his dark brown curls that I remembered.

It was the time of the Saturnalia.

After all, it was only the pagans who recognised the composite nature of man, and that in every man there dwelt a devil and an angel, save and except always the Irishman, in whom there is one angel and two devils. They gave to the gods the things that were the gods' and to the devils the things that belonged to them, and maybe there is not the great gulf between god and devil after all, don't they both spring from the same Father ? And so came the Saturnalia, when all Rome went mad and when even the slaves for a brief moment were free to do their will and loosed like angry lions swollen with lust only to be driven back into their cages when their work was done.

But these Romans were brutes. Every woman in Rome for the three days of the Saturnalia was free to the hands of every man—even a slave. The finest and purest blooded of Rome prostituted themselves

in the public places, and when the shadows of night began to fall, Rome gave herself over to frenzy—a frenzy of the gods as they called it, for they, like the moderns, ever gave the fine name to the foul thing. Men to-day before they go to foul war invoke the name of the Christ who was the Prince of Peace—men then invoked the names of the gods before they did the same. However, there was a difference, for the Roman gods were lusty devils. I say no more.

When I reached the school of the gladiators, I found old Lupus reeling about the courtyard, a wine flagon in each hand and capering like a satyr to the wooden torso which stood on its plinth in the middle of the yard with a wreath of flowers hanging around its neck, and as he capered, the old fool sang :

Hail Venus, my darling, look kindly on me.  
 'Tis Old Lupus that hails thee, come sit on my knee.  
 I'll kiss thee and cuddle though fuddled I be  
 Hail Venus, my darling, come fiddle-de-dee.

There was something apparitional about the old fellow as he spun upon his K leg, one leg shorter than the other. Up and down he hobbled, and now he would lift up one of the flagons to drink from it, and now he would pirouette like a dancing girl upon the game foot—a very miracle of dexterity if not of grace. And anon he would fall down in the sand.

In one of his posturings and as he rose up from the place where he had fallen, he caught sight of me standing in the gateway, to rise to his feet with a tipsy hiccough.

“What ho! my fighting cock. Have a drink!” And he held out the flask.

But I, impatient, struck it from him, and even as I did so caught the maniac glare in his eyes. The milk white eye was nearly closed and the other had that green light in it which you see in the eye-balls of tigers.

He did not speak, but crept closer to me, dragging his short leg behind him. There was something of fascination in this deformed thing as it crept foot by foot towards me whilst I looked down upon it, this thing that had been Lupus, but that was no longer Lupus.

And then it had sprung at my throat and I felt the old sinewy arms of my friend close about me and in a moment I was fighting for my life.

“Lupus! Lupus!” I screamed through my closing windpipe. “Don’t you know me? The Shadow of Cuchullin?” But I that was strong as any half dozen men in the Rome of that day, could not shake this awful grip, for Lupus seemed to have the strength of twelve. But as he heard my words, something seemed to penetrate to that sodden intelligence, sodden with devils, and so the hands had relaxed and Lupus had dropped at my feet a broken old man, whilst I reeled a little in the sunlight.

“By Bacchus!” he cried. “So it is you. I was possessed. I did not know you, my son. Why are you not in the Saturnalia with the others?”

I did not deign to answer him but looked steadily down at him. “Continence—abstinence—penance—the triple rule,” I said ironically, “helped by the scale, the water-clock and the tape.”

“ But not all the year, little Shadow,” he said. “ It is not natural but dangerous for man never to let himself go. It is not he that does these things but the devil that takes possession of him. The devils must have the bodies of men to do their work. All my gladiators have gone to the Saturnalia and the wenches, and the patrician women themselves welcome them—this one night when a man of the arena can lie with a wench in Cæsar’s Palace and when even the law of Cæsar itself no longer holds.”

Now the blood was hot in me, the Shadow of Cuchullin, whatever you may think—and I was young and in the full lust of life, with the hot springs of passion within. But because of something within and because I despised these Romans as to-day Irishmen despise all the world, I would not. And there seemed to me, dimly, something to be bound up with this fierce chastity of mine—something of the honour of Éirinn in Rome where I stood alone to uphold it.

“ Come with me to the Saturnalia,” said Lupus, “ Come, my young Irish cock ! ”

## THE SEVENTEENTH MEMORY

### DOOM

AND now befell what seemed to me then to be the disaster unwinable. The more dreadful things of life steal upon us unawares like thieves of the night. So it was that this thing stole upon me and Lupus was the instrument.

If old Lupus had not asked me to join him in the Saturnalia, the things unbelievable that I now have to recite would never have happened. For in this world fortune wears often the guise of her sister, misfortune. So it was in old Rome : so it is in to-day's England ; and so it will be until this changing world rushes together like a cloud of fire to pass away as the old soothsayers foretold.

Yet I have had my love and fight. I have seen what I have seen. I have endured agony of the flesh and the sight of my own blood gushing out in the sand with the life in it. I have known the plaudits of the foolish crowd. I have heard strange music and the thrash of the oars against the head sea. I have seen men die under the torture of their own and my own dear Ireland rent by her nearest and dearest. I have even in my present life seen Democracy pass into the death of the political machine and the dream of the

Parliament of Man disappear in a World War. I regret nothing, I hope nothing. Yet here stand I, once The Red Shadow, in the twentieth century, and look back the grey and gold of two thousand years and set my face forward to destiny, unabashed, unafraid, neither hoping nor fearing and yet hoping and believing all.

But how could I think of such things when that which seemed to be my irretrievable doom fell upon me like a black cloak over the face of a dead man? What could I, still a barbarian, but with the pricklings of high destiny struggling to find expression, what could I, I say, know at that time of all this I have written—I who then had no past but only present—not even a future?

But to return to my recital.

Fate had it that Lupus and I should find our way up to the Royal Palace—for no place was sacred in the Saturnalia. I was curious and he—well, he was mad.

For the madness had once more fallen upon him, nor will this be understandable of people of our day. Modern man lives in a world of three dimensions, but pagan man lived in a world of four dimensions. Length and breadth and height bound him as severely at ordinary times as any modern, but at any moment it seemed as if he could pass into the world invisible to become part of it. And, indeed, do we not all, whether we like it or not, spend a third of our lives in that world when we sleep?

We men of to-day live in the world of the material clamped there by the machine, which did not exist in that now two thousand year old world. Nay, as I

have before written, men to-day are slaves of the machine instead of the machine being slave of the man.

Men in those days believed in demoniac possession. The White Christ himself believed in it. The wise Socrates believed in it. Because men believe themselves to be "emancipated," emancipated by falling into the safeness of matter, they think they have abolished the world invisible that yet stands behind life and each one of us. They have not. They pass back into it again and yet again.

But this is not the place for these things. I will content myself with saying that Lupus, as he walked by my side, began to mutter to himself as he caught the ringing cries from about him and saw the sportings of the young men and maidens—aye and of older men and older women too. For in that day of the Saturnalia every man and woman had his or her chance. Not like to-day, when the old maid has locked up within her leathery bosom the dead passions of a life which has had no vent. Pagan Rome gave that vent. And who will say that, having regard to the age and time, it was not a merciful one?

And sometimes he would jump a little on his gamey leg and once he threw his grey muzzle and blinded eye into the air and howled like a wolf. Lycanthropy they called it.

As we neared the palace, I also found my legs moving from under me and my red head lifting and my nostrils swallowing the scented gale. As for my companion, he had thrown his head down just like the grey wolf that he was and so, despite my restraining hand, had started off upon his own hunting. Very

strange it was to see him as he ran, nosing from side to side, up and down, down and up, on his game leg and howling a little in his throat.

Strange things my eyes saw that day. Bedizened females with robes awry and staring eyes and flowing bosoms standing invitingly with that message which every son of man knows from every daughter of flesh. Grey women too tore at their dishevelled locks with the crimson flowers in them and shouted and capered like young goats, performing such feats of strength and agility (I saw one old girl who capered the height of her own shoulder) as could not be done by them when a third of their age. For the dæmon moved them.

Here a young girl bit at the air with white teeth as she snapped her fingers together in time like castanets. And there, a line of young men, their eyes starting out of their heads, their hair unbound, ran in a sort of twisted riot through the street, seeking whom they might devour.

In Cæsar's palace all was empty and quiet. Even the guards had broken away to the Saturnalia, and indeed at this season of madness Cæsar was just as safe as any common citizen and, with him, would be undistinguishable in that riot of colour and debauchery.

So it was that I wandered into the inner courtyard, sickened at the things I had seen—those things which to-day take other forms, for the breaking out of the original beast, suppressed but not extinguished, will not be denied. And, I suppose, too, I had the wish to see the lady Deeshie and to know what she would be at in all this riot.

For I had the wonder whether the lady Deeshie

would yield that strange soul and dainty body over to the demons of lust and pleasure. Yet I knew that the noblest ladies in Rome did so and that the feast had a suggestive mass force which seemed to be not withstandable. It was a madness that reached its highest when the white moon, chaste stirrer of passion and madness, rose over Rome.

Only that Lady out of the Sea was not a Roman but the daughter of a pirate.

It was when I stood within the inner court to wonder at the silence, that I thought I heard a sound from the other side of the great green curtains that hung there. There was a howling as of a wild animal and heavy breathing and the sound of movement on the marble floor.

I came up cautiously enough to the curtain to peep through it, to see a sight that for a moment stopped my heart.

It was the lady Deeshie in the arms of Nero. A distorted Nero that I did not know, almost nude, with the sweat dripping from his now ungarlanded brow—and indeed that was the only time I ever saw imperial Nero without his garland, for he was very vain.

The eyes were small, protuberant in the greyness of the face as he struggled with the little creature who fought inside his arms like a venomous snake, fought silently as was her way.

Her dark hair swung to and fro on her white neck whilst with her small arms she sought to get at his eyes and to strike them out of his head. Again and yet again she lifted her small knee like a battering ram and struck into the pit of his stomach in order to disable him. But Nero that day, soft bulbous Nero, possessed by his dæmon, turned and twisted to avoid that

knee and the claws which struck at him. For when the dæmon entered a man, he was of treble strength and of treble agility—he was, indeed, for the time being a lunatic. For the Saturnalia was man's surrender to the Kingdom of Darkness. And I, who am not Christian, do admit that the White Christ challenged the powers of that kingdom.

At the moment when I felt myself released from the impotence in which I found myself, the lady Dec-shie had wrenched her left hand free and had struck at Nero's eye, striking a runnel the length of his face from eye to lip, like the scar of Lupus.

As I reached him, he turned his bloody eye on me and as I put my hand on his imperial person, knowing that I had incurred death in doing so, he had flung himself on me, and was biting and mouthing like a mad dog at my throat. I felt the hot spittle of the brute on my face and the soft pulpy hands, now like iron fangs, sunk in my throat and the tiny mouth seeking the big vein of the neck.

Now I was one of the strongest men in Rome and Nero but a pulpy piece at best. I overtopped him by two heads and I suppose I could have strangled him in normal times with one hand without the possibility of his helping himself. But now I could no more free myself from those short fangs than if he had been a python. For he was possessed—he had his dæmon to help him and I had not.

I felt his teeth meet in my neck and the hot blood flow and felt him clamp himself to me and suck the hot blood which seemed to give him new convulsive energy as he sought to pump it down his throat. For the first time in a fight, a dizziness came over me and

a weakness seemed to take my limbs, the weakness they say men feel when in the coils of one of the great serpents.

And now the soft flesh of this werewolf had become marble and his veins iron, and his muscles toughened steel. For it was the dæmon.

I have known the gladiators with death breathing chill upon them to summon up their dæmon to have the strength of ten for a little while, and sometimes even to win against a still unharmed opponent.

It was in the moment that a great cloud seemed to be settling over me and that I had forgotten with what I was struggling, that I felt the claws relax, and I was free and was drawing the great breaths deep down into my chest.

I do not know what the lady Deeshie did to make the monster loose his hold, but loose it he did, nor have I ever asked her, for there are things of which one does not speak.

"When shall we be quits, Red Shadow," she said and she smiled a little smile to me. "For now twice have I saved your life?"

But she had reckoned without Cæsar, as we said in old Rome.

Nero stood there looking from one to the other with his bloody eye.

"You have saved his life, have you?" he asked with that high titter that was like the shrill neigh of a horse.

"Is it not mine?" The little creature asked with dignity. "You passed your royal word that it was mine that day here in the banqueting hall when the Shadow fought the Spider Man. And Cæsar's word was never broken." Which indeed was a great but

useful lie, for Nero had no word, but his vanity was touched, as she well knew.

“Nor shall it be broken, although he has set his hand upon imperial Cæsar. He shall not die by the cross or the poison cup. But he shall go to the galleys for life.”

• And Cæsar laughed again—the high shrill neigh of a horse.

## THE EIGHTEENTH MEMORY

### THE GALLEY

“DRANG-DRANG ! Drang-drang ! Drang-drang ! Drang-drang !”

He sat upon his raised platform, his tremendous back towards the bows, with his chopping block before him.

“Drang-drang—! Drang-drang !”

We, with our naked backs towards him, across the straddle-boom, worked over the great oars as we dragged them through the blue waters of the Tyrrhenian in time with the thrash of the heavy mallets on the timekeeper's block.

“Drang-drang ! Drang-drang !”

The timekeeper sat there with his bushy black beard sweeping down over his open shirt, a mallet in each hand, giving the time on the block.

“Drang-drang ! Drang-drang !”

That sound had been in my ears for three weary months. I heard it as I dozed over the oars. I heard it as I felt the lash of the whipmen as they ran along the platform between the rowers.

It remained in my dreams to haunt them and even now, two thousand years after, I hear it again. “Drang-drang ! Drang-drang !” a hollow chant of doom, struck from the wood.

The backs of the galley slaves strained over the heavy oars, in the stifling air of the 'tween decks with their

smell of old blood and human dung. There was the whine of the shafts in the rowlocks, the thrash of the twelve times twelve oars of the upper, middle and lower tiers as they struck the water together.

From my seat on the straddle-block, with my bare feet hanging in the stirrups of the slave-bank, I could see nothing but the hairy back of the man before me, a broadbacked Sidonian, as it swung to and fro beneath the drive of those bloody mallets, swung by the timekeeper behind. Beat-beat—beat-beat. There was the rhythmic swing forward of the one hundred and forty-four backs, the chuck of the oar in the wave, the pull through; then the lift for the backward swing that cramped the heart together in the box of the chest.

Men will sing as they will laugh even in the face of death and torture. And in the night watch as we softly beat our way through the summer seas, you would hear our song—"The Song of the Oar" as it was known in all the galleys of Imperial Rome. For they let us sing, even as men will give the man condemned to death small privileges before he is led out. None knew whence the song had come, but all knew it, and it has been sung on all the seas of the Roman world. Here it is in such poor translation as I can summon:

### THE SONG OF THE OAR

Drang! Drang! Drang!  
 And the beat of the oar on the wave.  
 Drang! Drang! Drang!  
 And the lash of the whip on the slave.  
 Drang! Drang! Drang!  
 The hiss of the spume through the port.  
 Drang! Drang! Drang!  
 The crack, the sting and the snort.  
 The run of the red on the white;  
 The claws, the whine, and the bite.

Clang ! Clang ! Clang !  
 The brang of the timekeeper's steel.  
 Clang ! Clang ! Clang !  
 The drag of the surge on the keel.  
 Clang ! Clang ! Clang !  
 The beat, the sigh, and the break.  
 Clang ! Clang ! Clang !  
 The breath on the hot intake.  
 The cry of the gull on the wind ;  
 The sighing of souls left behind.

Crack ! Crack ! Crack !  
 And the patter of feet on the plank.  
 Crack ! Crack ! Crack !  
 The breaking of hearts on the bank.  
 Crack ! Crack ! Crack !  
 The pull, the whine, and the fret.  
 Crack ! Crack ! Crack !  
 The burst of the bloody sweat.  
 How long ! oh Jove ! how long ?  
 The beat, the pull, the thong ?

Clang-clank ! Clang-clank ! Clang-clank !  
 There's the hurry of death in the air.  
 Clang-clank ! Clang-clank ! Clang-clank !  
 Speed ! Speed ! on the wings of despair.  
 Clang-clank ! Clang-clank ! Clang-clank !  
 The starting of sinew and vein.  
 Clang-clank ! Clang-clank ! Clang-clank !  
 Speed 'neath the sharp prong of pain.  
 The snarl, the whine, the roar,  
 The burst and the catching of breath,  
 Waiting the easement of Death,  
 Who stands at the end of each oar.

Now the beat was increasing. The twin mallets smashed themselves down upon the wooden block before the timekeeper with its iron-rim, to give out a ringing sound that might have been the clang of doom itself. Woe to the man whose oar failed to give beat for beat. The line of sinewy backs strained over the oars ; the dark heads bent themselves down, whilst the sweat dripped from the tousled foreheads, the blue veins started up under the glistening skins, and the

pant of the broad chests gave the sharp intake and deeper outtake in the exhaust.

There was the patter of feet on the running board that ran the length of the tiers, the crack of a whip, the hiss of the thong and then the bite of lash into soft flesh, a scream of agony, and the great war-galley quivered her length, as though she had felt the lash and then had leaped forward half that length. For every man there had heard that crack and knowing what it meant and what it was intended to mean, had strained himself against the head sea, which to each one seemed a wild beast to be overcome as it clawed at the passage of the ship to hold it back.

I knew as I swung on my bench with my stirrups a foot longer than those of any man there, that I should never leave the straddle-block with life in me. And life was still sweet in the mouth. In all that galley-load of misery I was most certainly the only man who did not yearn for the surcease of death to end his sufferings. For the slaves, without hope, helpless, without power to think, only to feel—one palpitating ganglion of raw nerve—would sometimes seek sweet death by kicking at or spitting into the face of the runner. Yet would this not bring release, only refined suffering by ingenious tortures. For he would be unchained from the straddle-block and taken to the hot irons and the rack, where, his spirit broken, he would be returned to the bench. And sometimes I have seen men tear at their own throats with their claws or set their teeth deep into the vein of the wrist. Yet would this not help also, for the runner, always a-watch for any drop in the oar-swing, would rush to the place and bring down the whistling thongs upon

the wretch, beating him to his task again, or if he had bitten or torn deep, would take him out and send him to the leeches who would rough-bandage him and nurse him back to the boom again.

Yet would I not die. I set my will inexorably against death. I would live. I would live to have my will of that foul Cæsar who, with a giggle, had sent me to the galleys for saving Lady out of the Sea from his lust, and I would live for that same lady, who should one day lie in my arms as I had once sworn to old Lupus. For by now, what with my sufferings and the fever of the oar, I was beginning to be in a bad way about that same lady. So I swung my long back over the oar and thanked the Irish Mannanaun for the belly muscles he had given me, inside my mother. The long-backed man did not usually last long in the 'tween decks of a galley, for the long-backed man has always the three inches of weakness at the base of the spine. Once in a hundred years, the gods put steel into the spine of the high man, and when they do, they have set the seal on the perfect man. That, they had done to me, The Red Shadow—but why should I boast?

Footsteps came and went behind me and there was the sound of voices, urgent, fearful voices as it seemed to me; and once from the deck above the clang of the Roman trumpet rang out, that brazen voice which was the voice of Imperial Rome. Wherever the Roman standard flared—there the Roman trumpet blared.

Every time those voices came, the beat of the mallets grew faster, and with them the answering beat of the oars until it seemed that nerve and muscle could no more endure. My long back was breaking as the

shoulder muscles knotted themselves to the drag of the oar. And then there stole along the line of men by that strange rumour which every man who has been prisoner knows, the story that our war-galley was being pursued. Be sure, by overwhelming force, for the navy of Imperial Rome was not accustomed to show its sterns to any enemy, however strong. Still, there are odds against which even the gods are powerless—or so they say. For I, Shadow of Cuchul-lin, who have faced fearful odds, believe that the will to conquer, whatever the odds, ensures victory unless Fate, against which no man of earth can fight, has made her final throw against him. And also, as it seems to me, every man knows in his heart when that throw has been made.

Something was the matter. The hairy back of the man before me had ceased to move, and as I swung forward over my oar, I could see through the sweat which streamed down over my nose that motionless hairy back, where it leaned a little forward over the oar.

There was the sound of feet running and then the smash of a whip close above my head, and then I saw the bloody runnels as though the claws of a great cat had been at work. The back before me quivered a little but did not move. Again and yet again there came the crack of the whip, the hiss of the thongs and the starting of other runnels until the flesh before me was one red tanglement.

It was then that I knew what the Sidonian would be at. He wished for death under the lash.

And through it all came the inexorable double beat of the hammers.

Here came the armourers to take the man out of his bilboes so that he could be brought to the torturers, the man resting there without stirring, whilst all about him the decks seethed with movement, urgent, agonized movement. As they struck at the last link of the swollen ankle, I saw the limp body suddenly surge upwards as though it had been spurned from beneath, to strike itself with crushing force against the beam that ran above. I heard the man's skull crack like an eggshell and then he had fallen lifeless, hanging head downwards, his right foot still caught in the stirrup.

Then the body was dragged away and another slave fitted into the empty place, and still the beat of the mallets came from behind and the backs swung to their work. There was the splash of the oars outside, and the thrash of the head-sea against the driven bow. Drang-drang! Drang-drang! The blood was bursting in my ears. A spear of ice seemed to have been run down my long back. And once the thongs had whistled over my head but without falling.

And of that too, there is a little story to tell. The day I had been fettered to the straddle-boom, I felt the thong once, only once. And then I had told the runner, looking him steadfastly in the face the while, that I would do my best, but that if he or any of his mates ever struck me once—only once—more with the whip, that I would kill him and them. Now I was but a galley slave, but I was also "The Red Shadow." There was not a man who did not know it. Such was my reputation that they knew I would keep my word unless death stopped me, and kill me they dare not, for galley-slaves were valuable. I was the property of Imperial Rome, and however ridiculous it may

seem, they feared me; the red-headed devil that had killed forty and eight men in the sand.

It was whilst my body was gradually numbing and I felt that my will to live was dying within me, at the very moment when I knew Death at the handle of my oar, that I heard a voice that brought back the senses to me with a rush that was like a pain.

As I laboured over my oar, I could hear the sound of footsteps behind me, and then, as dumbly I swung backwards and forwards like a pendulum, I saw a little figure with that head-poise I knew so well. With her was the captain of the galley, and a Roman General, a man of valour who was in charge of the soldiers on board. With her, also, was someone else I knew well—burnt-eyed Clistris, who looked neither to right nor left but held his thin nostrils together between thumb and forefinger as though the scent of our sweating carcasses offended.

The little, inheld figure with the tiny pointed breasts showing through the stuff of the bronze green robe that she wore, passed the length of the galley slaves, curious to see how things made in the image of men lived and died at the oar. Nor did such curiosity anger me. For the man of two thousand years ago was not as the man of to-day. The galley and the slave were as much part of life as the emperor or the sky.

Yet she did anger me, too, as you shall learn.

For, as she returned from the stern, looking idly to right and left on those banks of despair, watching the doomed wretches as they drave home their oars deep into the blue of the Mediterranean, who, fearing the whip, gazed not at her but at the bare back of

the man before them, she came to where I laboured, and stopped. As she stopped, I thought that my heart, over-driven, would have stopped too.

"I think I have seen that man before," she said.

"You have, indeed, noble lady," said the captain of the galley. "All Rome has seen him."

"Who was he?" she asked with as even a voice as though she had been asking about some wild beast, as indeed she was, for we were all, in that dreadful den, wild beasts. She spoke of me in the past, because the galleys meant the end of all.

"That was 'The Red Shadow,'" I heard the captain say above the working of the oars.

Now this affectation of ignorance was very dreadful to me, seeing that it was because of this same noble lady that I was chained to that bench. Yet, indeed, for one moment I took fond hope that she had not recognised me, with the hair grown over my face and fallen down on my chest and my matted locks that sprang out from above red and fiery like flames. Yet how could she not recognise the tallest man in Rome with hair like fire and a pair of blue eyes that no other in Rome possessed? For even in that dreadful place, pride had not left me. I was proud, proud as a god.

She came, a tiny sculptured figure, a little closer to me, and as she did so I felt the blood run back from my heart and my chest contract in agony over my oar. She came over to me, I say, having drawn a little away from the rest, as though to examine me at her leisure, and as she did so I felt something burst within me. I feared it was my heart, broken at last, as happened to many of the driven slaves, for even in that dread moment I did not want to die, and go

to my gods—not until I had done my work on earth, had won my woman, vengeanced myself upon the Roman tyrant, and established the secret wish of my heart—the Empire of the Celt.

As the thing gave within me, I turned my head and looked into her eyes as some old lion wounded to death might turn upon his hunter. I did not speak to her, but looked at her as I do not doubt, with burning eye and as burning contempt.

Then had this woman done a thing most amazing. As she carelessly passed my labouring form she had whispered, a whisper clear above the drive of the surge outside and roar of the oars: “To-night,” and for a moment, something had come into the jade of her eyes.

I thought I had been taken by the madness of the galleys. I counted my companions as I swung at my oar, and did many silly things to prove to myself that I was still among those who can think. I performed many childish devices to prove myself, but always I returned to the memory of that single word.

The sweat poured off me. I was a broken man. I had no more to hope than a carrion crow—less than any household slave, yet such is the quality of Éirinn, or is it of the humanity that is greater than Éirinn, in that moment the great round earth was once more at my foot—a ball to be kicked whither I would.

## THE NINETEENTH MEMORY

### THE TRYST

THAT day at the oar was the longest of my life. For the galleys that it was now whispered were those of the dreaded Viper, king of the Pirates of the Islands and father of the lady Deeshie, were gaining on us. They were indeed faster than we against the wind, but we had the drive of the treble banks of galley slaves and they did not spare us. All day long, the crack of the whip, the groan of the slave, was heard. But I held to it and sent up my prayers to Mannanaun the sea god, and he heard me. For, indeed, I have found that it does not matter much to what you pray so that you pray. For prayer brings into force the greater powers and invokes the thing that is behind the round world.

Now at night, we slaves were taken off the oar banks to sleep in the lower decks under the bilges, where, indeed, though the 'tween decks were a little hell, they did give us straw to lie upon. For the Romans were not fools and were never cruel for the sake of cruelty. A galley slave was a galley slave and, like any other animal, needed good treatment to get fair service.

As we left the bank one by one, the new shift took

our places. Nor did we work hour after hour over the oar. I have known days indeed when we scarce touched an oar with a favourable wind behind. But when a chase commenced, then woe to the slave! There was no mercy in the Roman soul for the slave, felt as he was to be of other flesh and spirit than the free man. The Roman master did not often kill his slaves—it was indeed an offence against the state to do so, following what I have already elsewhere written that every slave of us all belonged first to the state and after that to the master, who was responsible for his well-being, but he rode him.

But on this day, they kept us shift by shift every four hours alternating over this back-breaking task. In the second watch of the night, after I had been lifted off the straddle-block, for I could not lift myself, and had been driven with the others into the inferno of the 'tween decks, I felt the sleep so heavy on me that I believed I could not keep awake. I tried everything to prevent myself falling asleep in case the lady Deeshie kept her word, although why she should visit me, a galley slave, in those foul quarters was a puzzle I could not unravel. I counted my fingers and toes; I pinched my weary flesh; I told myself stories; and I fed my wakefulness with my hate. But in vain. The flesh was weak.

For it seemed but a moment ere I felt something pluck gently at the sleeve of my tunic, and then a small soft hand over my mouth and a voice in my ear that I knew.

“I have come, Shadow. It is I. The lady Deeshie.”

In that awful twilight, I looked up at the tiny figure bending over me as a man drowned in the depths of

the sea might look up at a spirit. And then for the second time in my grown life, I did something at which I have often wondered. I put my face down into my hands and cried.

"Fie! fie! for shame!" and her voice had grown strangely soft.

"Why do you come to me in my misery?" I asked, wonderingly. "Leave me. If they find you here, they will suspect the thing that isn't. You know what association with a galley slave means—it means death, lady."

"Mind your own affair," came the tart rejoinder. "What I do, I do of my own free will and none shall say me nay. I am mistress of my own actions. How dare you tell me what I shall or shall not do?" For indeed, as the gods are my witness, she was arguing with me in that place and at that moment, even though to be found near me might mean my death and her own.

"But why do you come into this dreadful place?" I asked again wonderingly, as I caught the strange musky scent that was part of her, so that something turned within me.

"Do you come to torment me?"

But she was silent. And I could feel her crouch quickly, as a lighted lantern shone down through the upper hatchway as an officer of the watch, hearing the sound of voices, peered through the square of the hole, his short curling beard showing plainly under the light.

"Who speaks?" said he. There was no answer. Nothing but the snores and groans of the slaves in their sleep.

But he was not satisfied. For with all these fellows

there was the ever present fear that the slaves would break out and do again the awful massacre of a year before on the great "Imperium," flagship of the Roman Navy, when the slaves had risen in the night, having been freed from their shackles by one of their number who had stolen the keys of the officer of the watch after strangling him. So it was that we saw him prepare to come down through the hatch with his lighted lantern.

"Crouch under me," I said to her quickly. "I am but carrion and it is not the first time that carrion has hidden life."

I felt her hesitate, even in that dread moment, and then I had put both my hands about her slender waist stretching my shackled wrists to their full extent to do so, and had lifted the tiny figure from the planking to place her under me as I turned over my great body in the straw with her beneath, her face upwards. And then I had let out of me a great snore as I felt the light of the lantern coming towards us. I heard the footsteps stop and the man look suspiciously at the place where I was, and then, to my fear, he had lifted my manacled hands and had half turned me over saying: "Are you asleep or are you shamming?"

As he lifted my manacled hands he caught sight of the face of the lady Deeshie beneath. I could see the horror in his eyes and the mouth open to give the alarm—but even as he did so I had brought both my hands upwards to close upon his gullet, and had pulled him down beside me.

Shackled as I was and weak as my sufferings had made me, I believe he might have broken free, had it not been for my lady. For in a breath, she had fas-

tened her small hands, catlike, into his great ears to hold him down, whilst I got over his struggling legs and lay on him with all my bulk whilst he struggled furiously in my grip. 'Neath the dim light of the lantern, I could see her face distorted whilst fire seemed to flash from her green eyes. In that moment she was a tigress.

Little by little he ceased to struggle, until, when I had let fall his blackened, swollen face from between the vice of my hands, there was nothing beside me but the dead clay.

But how to get rid of it ?

She and I lay there side by side, panting, whilst about us the slaves, stupefied by their exertions, slept like dead men.

And then I had bent my head down into my manacled hands and once again had wept like a little child.

I saw my companion look at me in astonishment. Then with that quickness of decision which I learned to know, she had quenched the wick of the lantern.

As I crouched there with the sobs breaking from my chest, I felt a tiny arm steal around my neck and then another came to meet it the other way, and I, scarce daring to breathe and wondering still whether I dreamt, felt the tiny proud head fall on my breast there in that dreadful horror, with the dead man close to us.

"Put your arms about me, Shadow," she said, and her voice came in a faint whisper as though from far away. But I sat there, still tranced.

"Put them about me," she said imperiously.

I lifted them, but they were manacled. This, feeling, she had lifted them to press her small head through the

manacled opening and had placed her full soft lips against mine and had kissed me a long burning kiss. And there we lay against each other. I scarce daring to breathe for fear that the enchantment might be broken.

And it was there that the lady Deeshie and I, the Red Shadow, and, excepting Cuchullin, the greatest fighting man in Éirinn, pledged our troth.

## THE TWENTIETH MEMORY

### THE PLAN

It may have been for a fleeting hour, or for a minute, that my dear lady lay in my arms. For we mortals do not live by time but by experience and feeling. I knew that whatever the future might hold for me of agony and misery I had won my woman. I had had toll of her lips and her heart. Nothing, not even the gods, could take that from me—for even the malign ones cannot take memory, the most precious of all.

What she told me that night in the 'tween decks of the galley made my pulses beat.

There were four galleys, all flying the dread standard of her father, who had been engaged in a sort of life and death duel with Imperial Rome for many years, starting from the time when Nero had stolen his daughter, the Lady out of the Sea, from him that day in the sea-fight at Cosevra.

This man, known everywhere as the Viper, was a terrible figure in the Rome of that day. He had his fastness, not in Europe but in Africa, in a maze of landlocked islands not far from the Bixerta of our day. Expedition after expedition had been launched against him, only to leave the rotting carcasses of galleys and men behind, and finally, Rome occupied elsewhere, had, at the last, allowed the feud to drop.

Not so the Viper, as he was known to the Arabs that sheltered him, who struck at the Roman galleys whenever they came within reach of his fangs. For had he not the whole of the African hinterland behind him into which to retire? Vainly did the Roman generals and captains seek to penetrate to his fastnesses, but his tricks were so many and his retreats so mazed, that all was in vain. As for the Africans, they regarded this pirate as one of themselves, half Arab as he was.

This was the terrible sea-captain who was now dragging up under full and flowing sail in the narrow sea between where stands to-day Torcévecchia, in the southern part of the island of Sardinia, and Marsala, the green viper flying spitefully at his mast heads and standing out against the inheld blue of the Tyrrhenian sea and sky. Each of his racing galleys carried nearly as many men as our single war galley, which had been surprised in a sea reported free of the Viper, who all the time had been probably hiding in the Agades isles, inhabited at this time by a number of unruly Sicilians as dangerous and as difficult as any of their successors of the dreaded Maffia, who had never really been conquered by Rome and who readily gave asylum to any challenger of the Roman power.

Nor in all this story, could I learn from my lady as to where her heart lay—with Rome, or with her father, from whose arms she had been torn as a small girl, and whom, like everything else, be sure she remembered. I could sometimes have thought from that as from conversations still to come that she was a woman dragged between two things—admiration for the Roman discipline and achievement and contempt for its standardization and soft comfort, for already the doom

that dogs all empires had commenced to invade the Roman heart and sinew: luxury and excess—and success. For nothing kills like success. (And here I will only say this in the plan I had formed which might seat me on the empire of the world. I, a young man without experience, knew nothing of that weakness or doom, and believed I was setting myself against the power that was Rome in the full flush of its success—although with craft. For I knew that, with jealousy at home and wars abroad, Rome rested on razor edges and that a couple of regiments set against the heart of Rome itself, at the right moment, might send the Empire of the World tottering into the arms of the poor gladiator known as the “Red Shadow.” In our own day a battalion did that to the Empire of the Czars.)

For like many men and all women, the lady Deeshie was two beings. One, wild and untamable—the thing that stood for the Viper and the Islands where she was born; the other the feline desire for comfort and luxury and refinement—the thing that stood for Rome. I have seen her spit and scratch at me and call me barbarian because of my contempt for all things Roman—an undying insatiable contempt that always left me, not a man divided against himself, but a whole man sure of himself. But she loved the Celt in me, too, that, like herself, was untamable, and, as it seems to me, the flame of my hair and my blue eyes, that were not those of any Roman.

She told me that the captains had held council together and knew that they could not, even with the treble banks of oars, hope much longer to keep off the fangs of the Viper. They knew also full well the fate that awaited them—for her father had never been

known to spare a Roman from that day when Rome had rived his daughter from him on the open seas. They had even spoken of how long they could fight—perhaps two or three hours and then the end—the Tyrrhenian sea and the plank, an ingenious contrivance of her father.

It was then that there came to me like levin from the cloud, one of those impulses which so often have determined my own life and those of others. At first, I would not speak of it even to the lady whom I loved but did not trust, because I believed, dragged between two things, she could not trust her own heart. Then I had to out with it.

“Listen, to me, sweet lady,” said I. “I have a plan. With it I may earn freedom and undying fame, and you shall perhaps win to safety, or I may earn death that is the end of all and so ‘good-night!’ I will speak with the captain of the guard and will tell him of my plan. Three hundred odd galley slaves have we, desperate, broken men, who will fight for sweet liberty as others fight for life. I will say to him that we shall be freed and given weapons and given a chance for our lives and the lives of others when the boarding parties come over the high side. What think you of it?”

But the lady Deeshie would not answer and hung down her small head as I could feel where it sank into my chest there in the darkness. And it was then I first got the idea of the two or perhaps two hundred women that were Deeshie. Her heart was with her father. Her heart was with Rome. But above all, her heart was with me, the Red Shadow.

“Listen to me, Shadow,” she said and she always

called me by that name from that night. "My life is safe as though I were already back in the island nest where I lived as a baby girl. For, you may be sure, my father knows I am on board, and has long waited for this day, knowing through his spies in Rome that it had been decided that I should go, escorted by the noble Clistris, on a pleasure tour to Sicily. And you know that you who are my lover and are to be my true husband"—and she trembled as she said it, did the adorable maid—"will also be safe when I make you known to him. So will we two be saved out of the slaughter to come, for the people out of the sea, my people, will make a great killing of it."

"And indeed and I will not," cried I, so loudly, that for a moment we feared to have been overheard and lay there trembling together like two young birds. "I hate Rome as much as your father, but there are two things I am going to do before I die—one is to marry you and the other to kill my man in the sand—and I will do that same even if the heavens hit the earth and I between the two of them. And there is one other thing," I added after a little while, "something of which I cannot speak now and that I can only do from inside Rome itself and a thing, maybe, that will set you higher than Cæsar himself and he under you—but of that I will not speak now—for you would be thinking that it is cracked I was." And with that I bit in my long tongue not to say anything more of my plan of empire.

Well she tried by all the devious ways of women to turn me from my resolution, not yielding, be sure, before she had proved every sort of woman-devilment to wheedle the secret out of me, including kisses that

shook the guts in me. But I was the strong man in those days with the great will on me and it tempered in fire and ice. And the more I loved her the more I wouldn't and that was the end of that.

And even if it cost me my own life, save Clistris for the arena I would—he that had spoken contemptuously of me and had said that it would be a pity to put his trident into such a stripling. But of that and of my two wishes I will speak in their own place, and even had I known what was to come, I would still have had my will with it. I was not the Red Shadow for nothing.

So, seeing it no use and the night drawing on and the first dawn showing where the hatchway still lay open, she gave it and me up—for that time anyhow. For Deeshie never gave anything up in her life, and with the queer pride in her voice that I could feel—for I could not see her face—she said she would tell Clistris, who in his turn would tell the general, to release the galley slaves and to put me over them as “the greatest fighting man in Rome”—my own words. For I felt the great pride rise in me, and it before the lady that I loved.

“ . . . or in the world,” she added, and so had laughed softly to me to slip out and away up the hatchway in the grey dawn like a wraith of the night.

## THE TWENTY-FIRST MEMORY

### THE PACT

IN these memories of mine there are gaps, gaps unbridgable by any effort of mine. I can only write those things which I remember, and when once or twice I have proved invention, it is only to wipe out that which I have written and to reach back to memory again. That is why there are so many strange gaps and perhaps even contradictions in my story, a story in which I find myself constantly flickering to the man of this life from the man of that life of two thousand years ago—but still the same man.

The next thing that I remember in this story of mine is plying my oar in the murk of the 'tween deck with the timekeeper furiously plying his hammers on the iron-capped block before him. Numbed from the agony of effort, I felt myself lifted from the straddle-block and my feet unlocked from their stirrups to be carried—for I could not stand upright after that gall of effort—to a cabin in which stood several men, including the captain of the galley and the Roman general.

In the Roman galleys it was, as I remember, the captain who had command of the things of the sea and the senior military officer of the things of the land, including discipline and fight. It was the general, a

bronzed man of the Roman middle-height, with face carved out of teak, who now addressed me.

"You are the Red Shadow," he said, as I feebly lifted my right arm in the full sweeping gesture from the breast and above my head in the Roman salute.

"I am, that same," I said, looking down at him, for now the blood creeping back to feed the nerves and muscles, I could feel my feet again.

"You are a great, tall man, Shadow," he said, admiringly, and indeed, why should I deny it? I was a great figure of a boy.

There stood Clistris Superbus by his side, with his toga wrapped closely around him, looking at me indifferently enough out of his hateful eyes, and with Deeshie near him. I should have hated this fellow, and I did, in a way, but there was something in him as a fighting man, that held me back from the ultimate hate. I wish I could paint this man in gall, but I cannot. He was a brave gentleman, a great fighting man, and a fair enemy. Yet I meant to kill him one day, all the same, and he saying that time I was a "stripling."

"The noble Clistris here has spoken of your prowess. He says that, perhaps excepting one other, you are the greatest fighting man in Rome, and he has told me of what you did on the high wall when you held Cæsar's palace against the slaves."

"The noble Clistris is always fair and a great fighting man himself," said I, not caring to be outdone, "and himself maybe the greatest fighting man in Rome—except one other." All the same, I could have sworn I saw the fellow flush a little, only that I never saw the blood in his face, if he had any, as I doubted.

"We know you to be an Irish gentleman," went on the general, "and we know in Rome that you never break your word. Will you give us your word now?"

"First let me hear what it is I am to promise," said I, cautiously as ever and taking no chances, for I always let the other fellow speak first and I was not red for nothing, as my nurse Oona used to be saying in the old days in Connemara.

"We want you to captain the galley slaves," said the general, "for it is said you have command among them in the secret fraternity that they have. We want you to pass your word, if we free you and them, that you will not run upon us but will help us to hold the trireme against these island savages coming up there astern of us"—and with that he pointed out through the stern door to the four galleys eating up the shining dancing space between us as our oars beat the seas ever more feebly.

"And the price?" said I.

"Rome does not bargain with a galley slave," said Clistris, interrupting, with the sting in his brown eyes that I knew so well.

"And for that, oh noble Clistris! you shall yet die in the hot sand if for nothing else—but I always meant to kill you from that day on the wall, when you struck me on the face. But of that we cannot speak now, for I, as you say, am but a shackled galley slave." And I lifted one leg to show where the mark of the chains still hung on me. "But there is to be a price all the same and it is on your word that I will put it." I said this, knowing him full well and that in this sort of thing he could be trusted.

"And the price?" he asked with a little tight smile.

"The price of my freedom."

"From the galleys?" he asked.

"No, from Rome, for if I am not freed from the one, so that I can be freed from the other, of what will it avail?" I said.

"How you hate Rome, Irishman," Clistris said.

"Hate and hate," said I, refusing to be drawn. "I am a free-born Irishman just as you are a free-born Roman, and the son of a King, which is more than some of us can boast," (for I threw it into his teeth)—"and I want to be free."

"Which would help you to escape the prong of the trident in the sand," said he, sneering again.

"Not that," said I with the fine carelessness, "for free or not free, I will yet put the death on you in that same sand, if the gods spare us our lives in the fight that is coming and we return to Rome. I want you now only to pass your word that you will plead with Cæsar to free me first from the galleys." For I bid high, being the son of a king.

"I promise that," said Clistris, "because of what you have first said—that about the sand," and he showed his white teeth a little again in the dark tan of his face. "But I can't pledge Cæsar. And as for Rome—what Rome has she holds."

"Then I will captain the galley slaves and will give my life for their conduct. But only upon one more condition."

"How many conditions?" asked Clistris, laughing.

"That they too shall be freed from the galleys if they come through this fight alive and save the galley."

"That is an easy promise," said Clistris, laughing, "like that other I made to you, for none of us will be

alive within the hour, I am thinking." And he looked over the stern at the laughing, foam-capped waves over which the four light racing galleys were dancing, with their green pennants standing stiffly out behind them, and the eyes and fangs of a viper painted on the bows of each of them in vermilion and yellow.

"I have not the right to give freedom to any slave, but I will pass my word that if we escape I will do my best with the emperor for them."

"Then," said I, proudly, "we'll write such a story this day on the annals of Rome as will make men speak of the Red Shadow and the shadows that followed him so long as Rome is Rome—which may not be so long as some of you think." For I *would* have a stab at them.

Through all this Deeshie stood by indifferently, without throwing even a glance at me. But maybe she was the wise woman after all, though I had the black anger in my heart against her for it, too. For I never looked better maybe than in that moment when I stood on the snowy decks of the Roman galley with the marks of the shackles on me and they there because of her—no, not even on that day when the thousands stood about me and shouted under the hot dust and sun of a Roman holiday . . . but that was yet to come.

And now the galleys were racing up astern. For as I walked down to the 'tween decks the timekeeper had stopped that awful beat, and I, standing there, my head nearly touching the deck, spoke:

"Oh comrades of the oar! Will you fight for Rome?"

They straddled there sullenly enough hanging over

their oars with the sweat dripping down over their tangled manes and beards like sick lions, with blood-shot eyes. They did not reply but looked at me sullenly.

"Will you fight for something dearer than Rome? Will you fight for liberty?" I said. And then there ran something through the banks of those doomed wretches at the word that never fails.

And then when I had explained to them my contract with the noble Clistris, who stood by my side, and he had confirmed our pact by a nod of the head, they tried to stand up in their stirrups as they shouted in the bass voice of doom.

So down with me then into those lower hells of the sleepers, where the stench of flesh and sweat was unbearable. And there I, standing near the hatchway, called to those sleeping forms to arise as an angel might have called on judgment morning. And they hearing me, turned over on their straw like animals, to watch me dumbly in the half light. And to them I also made appeal, and once more at the magic word "Liberty" they stood to their feet, staggering there in their weakness to the dancing motion of the galley and shouted.

And so arms were served out to the slaves, and they were freed from the straddle-boom and were placed under my leadership for the fight that was coming. And indeed it seemed to me that I had never felt the joy of life until that moment. Even the lady Deeshie receded and became but part of this joyful fight before death, for I knew that we had no chance. But who knows? Life is great and chance is strong and the gods were always good to the chancy Irishman.

## THE TWENTY-SECOND MEMORY

### THE SEA FIGHT

As we reached the decks, which had now been protected by the high netting which the Romans sometimes used in their sea fights and with spiked aprons at the more vulnerable points, which I had asked to be set up, I could see that the galleys astern had decreased their distance and now, like hounds straining at the leash, were racing hell for leather over the shortening space. Their great sails, with the devices of the sea painted upon them, bellied out under the following wind, for as we tacked for position the wind had gradually come behind us; a wind which sometimes drove their bows down into the smother, for the foremost galley to send out half an acre of foam ahead of her as she bucked under the pressure.

The front galley had the splay nostrils of a viper blazoned on her bows, whilst on her high stern and in her 'tween decks in the dip of her waist one could see her, a-bristle with men armed with axes and bows and arrows, with spears and with swords. In her fighting top, which was like a huge hogshead, was a barrellful of archers with their bows at the ready waiting to shoot the dreaded poisoned arrows which had first given the Viper his name and the secret of which he

had learned from certain of the African tribes. Men said they were made of rotted human lungs.

A brave show they made, as they came galloping like war-horses over the seas. For a long time it was not possible to distinguish one figure from another, but even at that distance I could mark a man standing in the bows of the first galley whose stature overtopped all those about him. As they drew closer, I could see that on his head he wore a serpent-skin made into the form of a gigantic viper head, at once a headdress and a shield, which covered his neck and spine.

He was a very tall man with green eyes and a great beard of red that swept his chest, and he must have stood near to my own height. The great carved viper's head at the prow seemed to be striking at us under each buck and dip of the galley, and now I could see the three smaller galleys, each also adorned with the viper's head, which began to spread out around us so as to encircle us as in a net.

"Remember," I cried, "keep under cover of the apron until I give the word, as a touch of the poisoned fangs means death. Only a touch."

My men stood at their posts where I had marshalled them in the waist to receive the first shock. A motley looking lot they were of unkempt mane and hideous mien, armed with the spears and swords which had been given to them. But some of them had preferred the curved houghing knives to which some of them were accustomed and in which they were adepts in hand to hand fighting. They had stood there, like the galley slaves they were, with but a strip about the loins to save them from utter nakedness. And as

the galleys came on, some of them howled like wild beasts, getting the madness upon them, and the foam flew from their jaws.

And now the first fang had struck. For as they came on, the bowmen in the fighting top of the foremost galley had discharged a flight of poisoned barbs. But I, seeing them, had warned my men, who had thereupon ducked behind the boardings which I had set up in that place so that the flight of arrows flushed themselves in the decks and boards. One tiny arrow had struck deep into the mast and remained there a-quiver as admonition. But a second flight had been loosed and one of my men incautiously putting his head above the apron to jeer, was struck lightly on the shoulder by a barb that passed above the edge of the barrier. He laughed at the scratch and began to put out his tongue at his enemies and to gesticulate, when in the same moment we, watching, saw him begin to tear at his throat, saw his face contract, and saw the foam drop from his jaws like a mad dog as he howled on his belly in the waist.

Then arose a dreadful cry of vengeance and fear from my men.

It was splendid to see the stolid discipline of the Roman legion as it stood drawn up on the decks as though on parade, and I who hated Rome, could not but admit it. Each man with his crested helm, with his short stabbing sword and shield, and the Roman nose carved inexorably against the blue of the sky. It was the heart of Rome that beat there—of a discipline unvanquishable. Clistris moved before them as coolly as though he were pacing a little before his breakfast, the general a little to the side.

Not a man stirred as the flight of arrows came amongst them, but I feeling the right of command, ordered them to take cover.

"Who are you to order my men to take cover?" asked Clistris moving towards me. And there was murder in his face.

"I am I. I am the Red Shadow that made Cuchul-lin show his last trick and he the Champion of Ireland. I do it by right of leadership. And there is the proof." For the men had sunk downwards at my word, paying that tribute to leadership which the world will pay to the end, despite the demagogues. And maybe there was fear too in that obedience—the fear of the poison. But that is as it may be.

It was at that moment that the foremost galley crashed against our larboard side, sweeping around with a graceful circling gesture, to smash the oars which, on my advice, had been left in their ports when the slaves had been withdrawn. As she did so, an iron rain of spears spewed itself over us from the swarthy creatures who manned her decks, many of them black as pitch, for the Viper often recruited his most dangerous fighting men from the Africans, much as do the empires of our day.

These fierce black faces, with their motley head-dresses of crimson and green and yellow, grinned and mowed at us as the galley swept round, the great white teeth and eyes showing in the soot of the face.

But the man who first dared our decks was not the pirate chief himself, but a little African axeman who sprang high in the air, as he ran along a plank which they had thrown out from the beak which had bitten deep into our side, crushing two of the soldiers as it

did so. But I, seeing the danger point, had sprung there with my long sword and coming out at him from behind the apron which had been set up in that place, spitted him in the air as he fell, to his extreme astonishment. For five minutes I may have held that bridge-head alone, for my men were all by then engaged at other points, and in that time I must have killed a dozen men as they came along the plank.

But now I was nearly swept off my feet by a shock from the other side as one of the smaller galleys had been run head first into the starboard side.

Covered as I was by the overlap of the apron at the single point where the beak of the Viper had crashed into our waist as we turned to avoid her broad-side rush, the archers in her fighting top were unable to reach me with their poisoned barbs. Also, I had free play for my sword arm, and so I spitted them as they came along the single plank, to my great content. Nor was it possible at this point for more than one man to do the fighting owing to its extreme narrowness where the prow juttet into the narrow opening of the waist, and so it was that for the time at least I had glory in my fight.

In all this, I had quite forgotten the lady Deeshie, who, as I found, had all this time been behind me watching me like a mother cat will watch her kitten, though a greater or more ungainly kitten one could not conceive. I would not have known of her presence were it not for the thing that happened after five minutes of fighting.

The press of the pirates was so eager on the prow that no bowmen could shoot at me from behind them, but on the other hand no other could stand by my

side in that narrow space to help me. But little by little the pressure began to tell, and although our bowmen drove their arrows into that press on the fore-beak of the pirate galley and I toppled them off like ninepins from the gangway as they rushed inboard, there could be but one end to such odds. One of them, a small swarthy man he was with the jowl of a monkey and with a hanger in his left hand with the curl of a houghing knife, had dropped as I struck at him so that my blade sang over his shoulder. Not daring to lower my blade because of the next man, this ape had dropped at my feet and would have hamstrung me as I fought above him had it not been for a long white arm that reached venomously around my left leg to strike downwards with a thin poniard into the spot where neck meets shoulder. He collapsed on the stroke, to fall into the bloody tides beneath. It was my lady, who had a very pretty way with the knife.

Now, the pressure was not to be endured, for there was the rending of wood and cordage as the third of the galleys crashed into our stern, to shake us from stem to bow and to vomit a welter of pirates on to our decks, what time the light and handy fourth galley circled about us like a hawk, striking now here, now there, with her poisoned arrows. But now the men before me had begun to give way. Some of them had leaped across the intervening space to clutch in our cordage like wild cats, some to drop into the water where they made the air discordant with their cries to comrades who did not heed them.

In all this fighting, the noble Clistris was always behind, directing as coolly as though he had been on parade with his legion, and sometimes even fighting.

And behind the pirate hordes, I could sometimes feel rather than see the giant king, the Viper himself, as his bass command rose above that hell-broth of flesh and steel.

As for my own men, they fought like fiends loosed from the pit. No finer fighting men have ever been seen than those half-naked galley slaves, fighting for their oppressors, but even they could do no more than men can.

In vain did we make hot the pails of boiling lead, to scatter them in the faces of our enemies and to burn them to the bone. One of them, a sightless monster he was, his eyes blinded by the lead spatter, ran hither and thither for some minutes, striking in a fury of hate and despair at the men who had blinded him, until a sword in the belly put an end to his sufferings. One great Berserker also there was, with a double-headed axe, who raged through the press smashing skulls as an ape will crack nuts, first with the hammer head of the axe and then using the great sweeping blade to mow them down. I saw this man cleave a Roman soldier down through his helm, through brain and skull to the jaw itself and saw the two halves of the head open.

We had now been driven from the opening in the waist from which the bow of the Viper's flagship had fallen away under the swell and so had dragged off like a wounded thing, her crimson forebeak covered with bloody festoons of dead and dying men, some of whom even fell from her as she moved on the waves.

Back, foot by foot, we were driven in the waist with the press of the pirates ever-increasing, remorseless. Back towards the raised poop, from where our com-

rades shot their arrows down into the mass as opportunity offered, but although by now the decks were slippery, it was only a question of minutes for the fight to make an end.

The lady Deeshie behind my bulk would every now and then dart out to drive her long thin dagger into the breast or side of a pirate. The pirates howled with rage and lust as they saw her, yet dared they not touch her, the daughter of their chief, who doubtless had given his commands about her. Also, she bore a charm which made her invulnerable—the great green ring on her finger of which such tales were told. On the other side of me, Clistris Superbus, flashing a trident most excellent.

Again and again, from behind, came the gleam of the long trident as it fleshed itself unerringly in the breast of a pirate and again at each thrust the pirates howled in rage and despair. Never had there been such a fighting as on the decks of that galley. My men, naked, with the blood flying from breast and face, gave out howl for howl, for in those days men did become possessed of devils in the stress of fight—it was what the Vikings half a thousand years later called the Berserk madness.

And of all these men, the man who used to sit in the bank immediately over my head on the straddle-block in the second watch at the oar, his back still covered with the scars of the whip with which he had been flogged, was the most terrible. A hare-lipped, pocked, wall-eyed demon he was, with the sloping shoulders and hanging arms of one of the hairy men that Hanno the Carthaginian once told of seeing on the African coasts. I thought I was the

greatest fighter on that galley, but this man—Usguth, as I remember, was his name—excelled even me, as his wall-eye and hare-lip made him the ugliest thing that lived and fought that day. I saw him drive the great mallet of the timekeeper which he used against the skull of a pirate to smash it and then as two others leaped at him to do him to death before he could raise the heavy mallet again, I saw him drop the mallet and seizing both by their throats as they rushed in, dash their heads together until they cracked.

“Here is some pretty play, gladiator,” said Clistris as he would flash out his long trident from under my arm. “This and this and this. Now for the throat,” and then he would flesh his steel unerringly in the hairy throat of some man before him. “Now the belly,” and in would go the trident with its razor barbs and come out again, sometimes dragging with it the entrails.

As for my Lady out of the Sea, I could not recognise her. In every woman there is a fiend, be sure of that, but that day in her I saw a legion.

The wind was singing in the rigging underneath that cold clear sky of blue. The waves were rushing over the interlocked galleys, whilst, ever, the small fourth galley circled about us as we lay there in the trough of the sea, spitting her arrows and spears as chance offered. And with the singing in the wind there was a great gladness in me. Gladness because I was making the good fight of the happy warrior and because I was doing it under the eyes of my beloved lady. And yet, even if in that moment I had seen that last fight to come, also before her eyes, I would not have blenched. For I knew and know that we are all in the lap of the gods, that everything happens

with purpose weighting it behind, and that nothing can cheat any of us from our inheritance.

For was I not a man of Éirinn, heritor of the world and of the stars ?

Back, inch by inch. And now we had our backs almost against the high poop. Back, another foot, and then step by step, up the ladders leading to the poop, giving sting for sting and the decks beneath us covered with forms that writhed on the planking. Never had such a fighting been made in those waters.

And now there were but a handful of men about me with the lady Deeshie and Clistris. As they rushed the poop, we made a great fighting at the heads of the stairways, sending them back on to the top of their fellows, who sought eagerly enough to press forward. Hough-hough-hough went the up-curved knives of the pirates—that dreaded underthrust against which there is only one guard and that difficult. Our men were dropping about us, screaming as they clutched at their bellies from those awful knife wounds.

It was at this moment that I felt behind me a crash—the fourth of that fight—and then had turned to see pouring on to our decks the pirates of the smallest of the galleys, which at that moment had boarded us, to pour her stream of men on to our decks, headed by the pirate king himself, who at that moment ran to them to lead them.

I fleshed my sword in half a dozen and then as I lifted it once more to face the Viper himself, a strange thing happened to me. I felt my ankle plucked from under me for me to fall prone on the slippery deck, and in a moment the pirates had surged over me and I had fainted.

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## THE TWENTY-THIRD MEMORY

### ESCAPE

WHEN I came to myself it was the dark night there outside and it moonless and starless, as we lay on the sleeping scarce breathing bosom of the Mediterranean. Above my head was a profusion of sail and mast nor could I in the beginning get the right understanding of it all.

About us was a ring of torches carried by the pirates, which threw strange shadows upon the torn and bellying sails, whilst the only noise heard was the grinding and creaking of the cordage and hull, a strange sea movement which I did not understand as yet.

Every now and then, there would come a great shout out of the mass. Nor could I comprehend its meaning until an opening in the throng showed me Clistris, bound to the broken stump of the mainmast, whilst at a few paces from him there stood bowmen who shot at him with their poisoned barbs. Pale as parchment he was and defiant of the ring of men who surrounded him to taunt. Great fierce fellows they were, many of them with gaping wounds and bound heads.

Much I marvelled at their skill. For now an arrow, a touch of which meant death, would graze his cheek or now would flush itself into the wood between cheek

and shoulder. And one of these men, a small and bony goblin, would send the arrows whistling through the tousled hair of the man, at which the pirates, in delight, raved again. But always on the face of that strange Roman there was a sneer. His contempt for his enemies was a beautiful thing to see.

But now a great shout from the high bow of the ship, which ground up and down on the swell. For somebody had set fire to a barrel set high above the water, at the end of a long plank, to light the sea about and to show the Viper himself seated on the high poop, a great drinking flagon of silver in his hand. It was the Greek fire beloved of the pirates of those days, the fire that could not be quenched, and it was from that I got the idea of which you shall hear.

It was a narrow plank, greased, as you shall hear. And now I saw a most lamentable sight, for the pirates in accordance with their custom spared none. And there began that long dreary march with its end in the depths, first the common folk—the galley slaves, and then the Roman soldiers.

And now a man was picked out by a pirate whilst all the time the Viper himself drank from up above on the high poop and enjoyed himself vastly.

This shivering wretch, his hands tied behind him, was forced out on to the plank by the spears of the pirates, pricked out along that slippery path with nothingness at the end; and as he stood hesitating, the plank was violently shaken so that he fell off from the end like a ripe apple, to struggle violently in the dark waters beneath.

Man by man, they were forced out along the plank, a method of death that long afterwards by others

was to be known as "walking the plank." And sometimes one of the pirates would ingeniously insert a barb of tow alight with Greek fire in the bare buttocks of the poor wretch or sometimes by methods still more dreadful to send him screaming to his end along the slippery beam.

I could hear the flop of the bodies as they went to their deaths, and one of them—he was that wall-eyed bench-mate of mine—as he passed the brute at the butt of the plank standing high on the bulwark overlooking the water did a wrestler's trick on him.

His hands were tightly bound behind him, but he sent dexterously a long whip-like leg about the fellow's legs and locking the other with it he wrenched himself to one side and still holding him clasped in that deadly scissors had plumped downwards with his prey to take him to the bottom like a stone.

At which, the pirates shouted with joy.

I wondered when my turn should be, as after them came the officers and the Roman captain. But these men, their heads erect under the Roman discipline, looked neither to the right hand nor to the left, but went scornfully enough to their deaths, stepping out as on parade.

The last was the general—Lestra was his name as I think in this flickering memory of mine. As he passed to the plank, the pirates howled in his face and struck at him until the red blood ran down his cheeks and onto his white toga. And into his old yellow body they inserted pieces of Greek fire—living fire that tormented him—into his ears and nostrils and buttocks.

But he, passing scornfully to his doom though tormented, and looking up to the pirate chief seated high

above, did say: "Viper, for this, you and yours shall die the death—and it shall be the same death as my own!" He said it with an infinite dignity, for about these old Romans there was sometimes grace unmatched, even though I hated them. And as he spoke, there came to me the plan which made true his prophecy—and what is or is not prophecy who am I that shall say? There are leaves into which man may look but never understand.

I had seen that the four galleys were interlocked by grappling chains and hooks, an inextricable tying. As the sound of hammering and pumping came to me where I lay, I understood what the pirates would be at.

One of them, the second, had been holed by the thrust of the Roman ram which had swung as she ran in, and so had been lashed to the others to prevent her from sinking until the carpenters could do their work on her and stop the leaks. And it was this, with that barrel of Greek fire, that gave birth to an idea that sent each hair a-tingle.

I knew that beneath where I lay, there were piled the stores of the Greek fire with which the pirates sought to burn their opponents, for I saw one of them fetch fresh supplies to the barrel, and indeed even in the palmy days of Carthage and for long before, the secret of this quenchless fire was known to the ancients. The pirates believed I was sore wounded, but nothing more was the matter than that my red head had hit the deck as I fell and that now there was a lump as big as an egg nestling there under my long hair. I felt myself cautiously to see how it was with me and found myself uncrippled.

As I lay there, there was a sound near me and the next moment a tiny figure had crept in close to me, and the scent of her hair that night is with me to-day. It is by scents, perhaps, more than by aught else that we remember. The scent that night on the Tyrrhenian of my lady's hair will be with me always.

She nestled in close to me, I say, to wind her small arms about my neck, and I, lying there on my back, held her in my arms as though she had been a little child. Very sweet she was to the touch and the smell and infinitely lovely. And that night I would have taken her as she wanted me but that . . .

She lay there a long time without motion, clinging about my neck. And then she had said to me :

"Shadow . . . take me . . . Shadow . . . . take me"—breathless like that.

But I—I would not. And in the days that were coming, I was often to wonder whether I had been right.

"Am I not soft and yielding and altogether yours ?" she asked in that angry pouting way I knew so well. "Is it that I am not beautiful—beautiful as those dancing girls whom you would not handle—for I know all about that, too ?" And she nestled again close to me.

"Is it that no woman is beautiful enough for you ?" And now she was very hard entirely to resist in her abandonment.

I held her close to me, not even daring to set my lips to hers, and they with the bristles of the galleys still on them.

"And I have sworn that I will not take you or marry you Deeshie," said I, using her name for the first

time. "Not until I have set you as queen upon the throne of the Cæsars."

At that, she thought me mad. And so drew a little away from me, as I could feel in that dark place.

It was then I told the lady Deeshie for the first time that I had resolved to kill Nero and head the slaves and the army to the undoing of Rome and the building up of a new empire with a red-headed emperor. I told her that an Irishman could do anything and anything that an Irishman swore, that would he do and that he always had done. But in that I'm thinking I told the father and mother of a great big lie.

"Why when Rome was an anthep, wasn't Ireland a palace?" said I, forgetting time and place. "Hadn't we our great Druid teachers and weren't we versed in all the arts and sciences of fighting and other things when the Romans ran about howling like wolves and suckled by them too—for have ye never heard the story of Romulus and Remus?"

"I am sitting on the empire of the world," said I as my imagination set fire to my understanding. "And you will see all the countries of the world under Rome and me, and they willing to come into that same Empire, the first Empire of the world that was a willing instead of a forced one. What would a fat pig like that Nero do with his gamings and his fights and his lovings and his brutishness? But when they see me, that no man in Rome can look in the face, seated up there in the Palatine, and when they see the Irishmen that I'll bring into this country forsaken of the gods, and the pipes, the darling pipes and the green and saffron kilt—oh 'tis then they'll see the real ruler.

And you shall be my queen-bride and shall lord it over the whole earth."

Well, although I say it myself, I always had the big idea. But what the end of that idea was to be will unfold itself. And who am I, even now two thousand years after, to say that these things never shall be? One ounce of will fired by one spark of imagination can swing the world. The will to power is to have power. Though whether it is the new man or the old speaking here is more than I can say.

"And apart from that," said I, "wait until you'll see what I'll do to these fellows, to your father and all, alone with my bare hands." She looked at me as though I were daft. And indeed, that is what I was in that same moment. For 'tis only when you are daft that you can do things. The gods are with the cracked.

"Sure, wouldn't I have slaughtered him myself, if some great big blackguard hadn't plucked my feet from under me when I was about to do that same? I wonder who he was?"

"That was me," said Deeshie, and never the move on her face.

## THE TWENTY-FOURTH MEMORY

### THE OPEN BOAT

It was the mid of night and of carousal, when the island pirates were chasing one drink down their brassy throats after another as fast as you could kiss your hand, that I began my work.

It was a calm night still, but with a scend of sea under our uneasy keels that told of wind to come. The night was heavy and black with a sort of pall in it that blotted out the stars. But on that silent sea there rose from the knot of wreckage and human beings the sounds of revelry and, the sport with the slaves and soldiers finished, sometimes of fighting. But the voice that roared itself over all the rest was that of Deeshie's father, the Viper.

The pirates had nearly all collected themselves together upon the poop of the flagship and in the place where I lay near the bows, there was but a tiny bunch of men drinking together and they white drunk itself.

From where I lay, I could see the caboose where they kept the Greek fire and I could also see the small boat which might mean our salvation, where she swung astern on the scend of the sulky running waves.

Deeshie I had not told my plan, for I feared that if I did, she would not let me do it. Also a thing begun

is half done, and there are things in which no man can trust a woman, who has her own notions and motions. So down into the caboose with me to the great chests where the fire lay, but all locked and bolted with stout bars set through iron hasps. Nor had I any key with which to open them ; nor could they be forced ; for all dreaded the Greek fire that was like a madman waiting to get his chance to get out, and so kept it close locked.

There were four chests of them and all shut as tight as the Rock of Cashel. I caught hold of them one after the other and setting my back against the bulkhead of the galley tried to prise them open with a short marlin spike that I had found. But so perfectly were they made that I could not get the point between lid and lock to do my work.

But it was like many another hard puzzle in this world. The door was lying open to me all the time and I not knowing it. For the fourth box, iron-clamped, as I came to it, was bolted and barred it is true, but the lock itself had been left swinging loosely in one of the hasps and open. And so with great content I came at my treasure.

In the dark of the night I went from place to place with my precious load, inserting some underneath the bulkheads, and some under the inner skin of the galley—but all within catching distance. As for my dear lady, her I had set in the small boat to be ready for me when my work would be done.

But a touch-fire I could not find, until I thought of Deeshie, from whose small head, to her astonishment, I shore a lock which I left hanging through one of the lower ports in touch with one of my fire packages. Nor

did I take any chances—for I was not red for nothing and Oona my nurse had always the right of it—and so that it should not fail I did the same with another package a few yards further along. But that trick of the hair for touch-fire was an old trick that I had learned from the sailors of the Roman Navy, who themselves had learned it from the Greeks.

When I had nested the last package, I crept the length of my belly forward along the bloody decks, but as I came abreast of the galley entrance a voice hailed me and I lying my length under the lee of the galley. It came in a great roar from above my head and I knew in that moment that it was one of the pirates who for some purpose of his own had gone forward and so had heard the sound of my coming. I looked around the corner of the structure to see him standing there, a great figure of a man, and Deeshie in the boat below, waiting to cast off—a little cockleshell swinging dizzy on the waves, that ran astern, and the wind rising.

I feared that his roar had been heard by the others and could feel that he was about to open his maw once more. But I in the same moment had plucked his legs from under him, doubtless to his extreme amaze, and had hammered his brains out on the deck with my two hands clutched in his beard before he came from the senses of his fall on the hard deck; for there was not even time to use the knife in my belt.

Then running down into the cabin I had seized two loaves of black bread and some grapes, and, in my hurry, a couple of flagons of Falernian wine, although indeed one drop of water would have been worth it all on the open sea and what we had to face.

And then I had slid down the mooring rope to where my little lady lay waiting, with her oar fending off the boat from the side of the great galley, as though she had been a waterwoman all her life, and beyond.

With a slash or two of my knife, I had severed the rope, but instead of racing out to the open sea on the moment with death behind yapping at our heels, I said to Deeshie :

“ Let you take one of the oars and make no noise, for we are going to take a row around the fleet for to pleasure us.”

She looked at me as though I was mad. Then with the little quick way that she had, she did what she was bid, and if the women always did that, the world might go easier, and so with infinite manœuvring we came to the first of the galleys with their small boats swinging on the seas, where they had been carelessly left when the pirates had finished plugging the leaks.

A slash at the rope of each, and they were bobbing astern like corks on the rising seas. It was only then that I came round again to our galley, once more to Deeshie's astonishment, and fumbled for my tinder box.

This was the dangerous moment, for if the touch-fires failed to fire or if the pirates saw the first flame before they burned themselves into the guts of the ships where the locks of hair ran in at the ports, the gods alone know what might have happened. For these were fierce fellows and if they cast adrift one of their ships they could have rowed after us and run us down into the depths of the Mediterranean.

But we were to leeward of them and well hidden so I did not fear too much, but all the same a tiny trickle of fear seeped to my heart—which is the way

of all brave men. Though indeed had it come to a fight we were not finished—but that is by the way, for what could even I do against a fleetful?

The fire ran in quickly at the first of the ports and I was after the next port before I waited to see if it would catch, but quickly I had to return. For whether it was that a splash of the rising sea had wet it or not, the touch-fire of hair would not catch. Twice I tried and twice I failed, and then had fled along to the next port, where I took out my tinder-box once more.

There was a hissing and spluttering and when I thought it was going to serve me as the first, I saw a tiny frizzle of flame run along the loose strand of hair and disappear into the black gorge of the port.

It was then in my joy and fear that I cried incautiously to my little comrade with a great voice, forgetting time and place:

“Give way now in the name of Mannanaun!”

My shout was answered by another, and as we thrust off from the side, it was to see the pirates rushing to the side of the flagship and into the other ships. From inside the hold, there came a great spluttering and guttering and a burst of flame had shot up through an open hatchway.

I saw half a dozen rush to where the little boat had been moored, only to curse as they found it gone. And then they had forgotten us for a moment as the Greek fire began to get to work and they were trying like mad people to cast off the chains and ropes with which the ships were bound together helpless in one swaying mass.

But whether the pulse of the rising sea had tightened the chains inextricably together, or whether the torture

of the fire distracted them, I cannot say—but separate the living hulks from the fireship they could not.

And now they began to howl, as the fire ran like writhing serpents over the fireship and had leaped to the next boat which now began to take alight. But we—we were driving our short oars into the smooth-running sea and were scuttling away from the doomed ships as fast as our arms could drive us.

And there in the pall of the dark night each time that we rose on the scend of the stealthy, unbreaking seas, we could see such an illumination as the *Mediterraneum* had never seen before, a hugeous balefire in the midst of the ocean.

But from that bale there rose such a screaming and howling as might have come from a cageful of tormented cats. And now the flames had caught well hold and were ravening into the shells of the ships, all four still held together, for the stores of Greek fire which all warships carried were now catching in the other boats in which also there was much tar and other combustibles.

The flames ran upwards to fasten on the sails and cordage and to throw strange shadows far out over the smooth sea, and then there came a great shout from the galley of the *Viper*, which had at last been forced or forced itself apart from the burning mass. Under the freshening wind with its great spread of hull and rigging, it came drifting down to us like some malignant sea-beast with the great viper blazoned on its mainsail. Still untouched it came, bearing down upon us, and we could see Deeshie's father standing high in the stern urging on his men who, vainly, with buckets, sought to stifle the implacable flames.

But Deeshie, she that but a short hour before had plucked the leg from under me to save her father, never made any sign. This strange girl whom I never knew, sat there with set brows and white lips looking on at that same sire as he raged in the stern. And the howl of his bass came to us even above the wind, which was now fanning the flames into fiery banners, which shone again as they flapped about the grinning viper.

And we, we could not have helped them an' we would—indeed truth to tell, we dared not. And why should we?

As they came abreast, the pirates began to jump into the water to save the torment. We would see the heads for a moment lifted under the flames upon the dark swell, to disappear one by one. And we, afloat there in an open boat at the whim of wave and wind, looked upon the Viper, a charring fiery cauldron, as she drifted past, with little dark figures of men jumping against the hotted background.

By this time, the furnace of the three interlocked ships was beginning to die down on the horizon, to gleam dully through that pall.

But Deeshie, Deeshie who had sat dry-eyed and steady as she looked upon the galley of her father unmoved, Deeshie had burst into a fit of weeping, and at the peril of capsizing us, had crept to me where I sat abaft, keeping her stern on to the following seas, which still showed no white in them. For had they done so, our frail barque would have gone down like the cockleshell it was.

But those that chance will save he saves. For Chance is a great boy and all!

All through that night we sat together in the stern

but now, instead of showing our stern to the seas, with our two oars bound together and floating ahead of us a sea-anchor and riding the waves to our quiet content—and I, I, for that night at least, was once more king of the world and she was my queen.

Already I saw her sitting there where Nero now sat, and I by her side with the red hair flaming on me a sight for men to look upon. Already I could hear the clang of the Roman trumpets and the shouts of the shouting thousands. I, I was drunk. Drunk as hell. Drunk on pride and glory and power, and me in the midst of the lonely sea.

There was only one fly in my ointment. Clistris was dead. Never would I meet him in the sand now to see who was the better man—and, for it was only then I thought of it, where would I be with Cæsar without the word of Clistris to bear witness to our bond and my courage? In that minute I fell off the top of the world again.

And Deeshie—Deeshie worshipped me. With the jade-green eyes of her looking at me from where she crouched in the boat.

Love and death. They are the same thing. And to have known that moment was to know all the pride and glory of life and of living.

## THE TWENTY-FIFTH MEMORY

### THE TRIREME

OF the five days and nights that followed I cannot here speak. They came and went in a flickering nightmare; for I, with that cocksureness that has destroyed so many of my countrymen, taking no heed of event, had not thought to take away with me any drink, save for those two poor flagons of wine.

The sea went down in the dawn of the morning and by midday there was a soundless calm with a sun hot as a furnace brazing down at us. By noon we had drunk one of the two bottles of wine, that indeed only seemed to exasperate the thirst of us. And after that, there was a sort of unconsciousness out of which I would come from time to time as a spirit might put his head down into this world and then pass back again, to see Deeshie lying there with dull eyes and her cheeks as hollow as Death's own.

"I am thirsty, Shadow," she said to me again and again through that day, like a little child. "I am thirsty. Give me drink."

She, who had never known the want of anything, looked to me as to some powerful king who could do all by wishing. But even I could not bring the rain down out of the sky—for that I knew only Manna-naun could do—and that same boyo with difficulty.

The remaining three days went in dream-cursed sleep from out of which there would be a waking into torment. I wish I could say that Deeshie had acted the noble part of comrade, but the truth is that in the third night she found the second bottle of wine that I had hidden and drained it to the last drop, and then had run to me where I lay at the bottom of the boat to tell me and to ask for forgiveness. But I was past forgiving or anything and nearly past love itself—yet even at that pass I still felt something towards this elfish thing.

And never a sail in sight and that in a crowded sea. But there was no wind to bring one to us and unless one driven by oars came, and that maybe a pirate, we had no chance.

And always the furnace above, and we two sun-blackened beings lying at the bottom of the tiny boat. And once Deeshie tried to drink the sea-water and would have done so but I summoned up what strength I had in me to strike her on the jaw so that she could not and she looking at me like the astonished child as I raised my fist.

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It was the fifth day and I lying in a horrible dozing that was like dying under a heavy tombstone, that I heard the measured beat of oars. There had been a slight shower in the night, some of which we had lapped up as it fell into the boat and this had given us strength. But for that shower of blessing we would have died that night on the *Mediterraneum*.

In the light of the morning sun, there came to us stately over the thinly running swells, a Roman tri-

reme, with the eagle emblazoned on its single sail and the three banks of oars implacably moving.

There she came, like some great sea bird, her high bow-ram nosing in the beams of the morning sun, moving as though propelled by some interior secret life. And as I saw her, I tried to call out with my swollen tongue—and then all was dark.

For some days the leeches worked over me and the lady Deeshie and though I blush to recount it, I was the last to come to myself. The first thing I saw was the face of Deeshie bending over me, and the second, to my exceeding surprise, the noble Clistris, who had been picked off a spar on the open sea after the Viper's ship went down—so was the chalice of my luck full and so should I be able to kill him one day, after all! As for Deeshie, she made a quick recovery that astonished all, and Clistris, that I could have broken across my kneebone with my bare hands, was walking about within three days and looking as though a spar on the open sea was the most natural thing on this old earth-clod.

It is not for me to tell of the flare the story of the burning of the pirate<sup>e</sup> galleys made in Rome and the nine days' wonder that it was—for the rolling up of the earth itself would not have made a wonder longer in that city that was spoiled sick on rumour and terrors.

Clistris kept his word, and I was freed from the galleys by Nero, who sniggered as he gave me my freedom. "But," said he, "that will not save you from the arena and from the trident of Clistris."

"And Cæsar," I came back at him, "who am I that I should be saved? Yet I tell you, oh just and merci-

ful Cæsar! touched by the finger of Bacchus, that not even that same Bacchus himself could hold me from my just reward—the reward of doing battle with Clistris that I saved and who saved me—a gallant gentleman that I am one day going to kill in the sand.”

But as for the lady Deeshie, she made no sign and was once more her queer eluding self. Yet all the time I went forward with my plans for the conquest of Rome and of the world. Only that between that world empire and me, there stood the quick white body of Clistris with its prong. But was I not the idol of Rome and of a people who were murmuring more each day at the excesses and the refusals of Nero? For Democracy is a burning beast that battens on the things which it feeds; and the more you feed it the hungrier it is.

And there were murmurs in high places as well as in low—and if there was a man in Rome to overthrow the Cæsars and to lay the foundations of a new Empire of the Celts, who should it be but me, the Red Shadow, though I say it myself?

*Democracy is a burning beast; it fattens*

## THE TWENTY-SIXTH MEMORY

### ON THE EDGE OF EVENT

OF the days that followed even now I can scarcely speak, though since all this, two thousand years have spent themselves. Each day I saw my beloved—sometimes in lonely places and in the catacombs; sometimes in the palace, for she was fertile in shifts; and once even at the school of Lupus, where I had again taken up my quarters.

And each time I marvelled at the mixture of ingenuity and guileful innocence that is woman. But maybe it is I that was the innocent. Yet what man can ask that question and answer it as well?

Through all this, my plans went on. And now I knew that the gladiators were in my hands and would do my will when the time came, for Nero had capriciously stopped their privileges, including that of breathing-spaces between the combats, and now had plunged Rome into such an orgy of blood and terror that these poor fellows could not be sure of a lease of life from the rising of one moon to another. Time after time they fought together at the royal command and spectacle succeeded spectacle—and all the time the mob, drunk in blood, cried “More! more! more!” howling for bread and the circus.

But though Nero gave them the circus he did not give them bread, for circuses were cheaper than bread. And whenever that cry, the cry of the hungry, came to his royal ears, sitting up there in the great palace he gave them a new circus. In vain did his counsellors speak with him—when they gave him the advice that was bitter in the mouth he had them sent to the noose or the torturer or to the fish, so that now all Rome, high and low, cried aloud and writhed under the agony of Cæsar, who spent his days in the making of verses and playing on the lyre and his nights in banquetings and strange lusts.

Already, knowing my power with the gladiators, who really held Rome in their hands as they always had done, Severus, one of the Roman generals, had approached me privily to sound me. For he, too, would make an end of this monstrous tyranny and of the monster behind and headed a secret cabal of the nobles. Yet was there ambition in it too. But some, Clistris with them, stood by Cæsar. And so one had to tread warily.

And I, I would not say “yes” but I would not say “no”—and so left it open until I would be seeing what way the cat would jump and what Severus really had behind him. For he had power with the soldiers and I knew that could he depend upon even but a couple of legions in this time when Rome was depleted of troops through her war with the Gauls, we should win the day. And Severus himself, as I knew from my own spies, had his eye on the imperial power, for he was a man of monstrous ambition. But I was that myself—yet with the greater right—for was I not the son of a king and an Irishman, and wasn’t I bent

on destroying the thing that was Rome? Wasn't my empire going to be a free empire with every nation a free agent? At least that was my idea, but to-day I say, God knows what sort of an empire that empire of the Celt would have been—maybe the empire of a madman.

And when he and I together had made an end of Nero, then perhaps I would make an end of him—or would banish him for ever. There could not be two cocks on the Roman midden.

Severus wanted us to rise on the eve of the Games—but I would not, and the more he pressed me the more I wouldn't and that for a reason that a Roman, that always looked to hard result, would never understand. For rather than the empire of the world itself, I would have my will on Clistris in the sand. He would be the first and the last that I would ever want to have my will on in the arena—but I would kill him first if a hundred empires awaited me.

Nor was it that I hated him. If it comes to that, he even had my admiration. Perhaps it all came from that day he looked the queer way at me in the gateway of the school, the first day I set eyes on Deeshie—and maybe it was just pride—but there it was, and there was I. He had sneered at me and maybe despised me in his heart and believed himself to be my master. But I would show him and all Rome how men might fight. And I would show the lady Deeshie, too, for she would be looking down upon me with her eyes like lamps.

And maybe that was not the first time that a man put the empire of the world on a pair of woman's eyes.

As for Severus, he thought me mad. What! to go down into the sand with the most deadly fighter in Rome and put my life on the end of a trident! But for that matter, all the Romans thought the Shadow mad, and it was that very thing that perhaps gave me the power over my gladiators as it gave me power over Nero—for they all thought me touched by the gods.

But no, I would not. And so we set the time of the rising that was to see me crucified or sitting on the empire of the round world, for the last night of the Games, when a stroke would be least expected and the few regiments left in Rome to manage the crowds, would be wearied out with the heat and struggle of the previous days. For Severus had managed it that our own regiments would not be on duty. All this, if I did not leave this white body of mine stretched in the sand with the mark of three prongs in the white, to be dragged out by the hookmen into the shambles.

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## THE TWENTY-SEVENTH MEMORY

### I SAY GOOD-BYE TO DEESHIE

It was the night before the last day of the Games, the day which was, as I say, either to see me with my foot upon the empire of the world or dragged like a dead dog out of the sand with a hook in my belly.

Nero had had one of his shivering fits and had been declaiming to his lyre and muttering to himself, alone save for the lady Deeshie to whom he would always cling in his dark mad days. He would say that he was a reincarnation of the infant Bacchus and that she was his mother and the gods alone knew what other vain fancies of a brain overwrought. For this poor monster was a cracked monster.

Vainly did he try to stifle memory and, as they said, since the murder of his wife, conscience by nightly orgies and by the bloodiest games that even Rome had witnessed. Even the spectacle of men and beasts fighting together failed to satiate—and so he would keep the lady Deeshie by his side until the shrinking hours of morning, so that the shadows came back to lie once more in the hollows of her cheeks.

All Rome was gagging of the fight between Clistris and myself on the morrow which was to terminate the Games and which was to settle once and for all

the new-old question of superiority between us, which had been chewed over for the previous twelve months at every Roman street corner. This duel was to be the only spectacle of that final day.

But I was to give these Romans something more than the spectacle of single combat. Little did they know that I was bidding for more than the empire over the body of a man—that I was bidding for the empire of the world itself. Nor would they have understood had they been told. They would have said with the Roman laugh: that it was just the madness of the Red Shadow. Yet would I not seek the empire of the one without having the empire of the other, for how could I face myself if I didn't first face Clitris?

But this night, when like lamps of heaven the stars hung low and misty in the moonless heavens, I would spend with my lady, even though on the other side of to-night lay the death that is the brother of love. Each night had she been watched by the jealous madman who was her master and Rome's. Each night, until the little hours, had she sat listening to Nero's ravings to his lyre in the great room of the palace, where, upon his throne, laurelled and robed, he would declare that he was a god and that, as a god, he would burn the round world itself before he was translated to Olympus, and all his enemies with it. All this had my lady told me in the infrequent, difficult meetings of those last days.

Her chamber was on the outside wall of the palace, whither she had gone for the air from the hills, as she had told Cæsar, but, as I believe, to be far from the horror of the central places with their feastings and

revelries. She had told me that she was sick-weary of the incense and the heavy perfumes.

I, I had sought to send a messenger to her to tell her that this last night I would spend with her, Cæsar or no Cæsar, but scarce a mouse could have entered that fortress with its doubled guards—for Nero believed that all would murder him, and faith! he had the right of it there, for all Rome groaned under him and hated him. Nevertheless, there might be a way.

For where the messenger could not go, the arrow could. And where the arrow went, perhaps my great body could follow. For, indeed, I was mad with the love of her and the thought of her slant eyes looking at me like a wild thing.

So with threat and love, two strong fellows, I persuaded a Persian bowman of the school of Lupus, whose life I had once spared in the sand, to affix my message to one of his arrows and when night had fallen, to steal within a bowshot of the palace. Yet, as the fellow said, he could not hit a tiny window high in the wall unless there were a light inside. So that all depended upon my lady having a lamp in her room some time in the early evening, and upon my bowman getting close enough without being stopped.

But for that last night at least, I was the darling of the gods. And when we two had stolen to an old building within a bowshot of the palace and had waited a little half hour as it might have been, we did see a light in my lady's chamber. Such a tiny flicker of a light—but my Persian had the tickliest string finger in Rome. And so he let fly.

Twice did he send his trial arrows to test the edge of the night wind, and to allowance it, and each time

my heart leaped straight up into my throat for fear that at that moment my lady might cross the line of sight and so receive an arrow in her small body. And twice did we listen for the impact on the outer wall. The first must have struck the wall, for we heard the crackling as it broke on the marble, but the second gave a dull noise out of it to show it had passed the portal. Then, with the parchment tightly wrapped above the feather of the bow, did my bowman steady himself for the final try.

The window seemed no larger than a galley port, but I knew that these bowmen could almost hit a fly on a wall—and so I hoped. Slowly he drew back the string and then had softly released the arrow into the night. We heard the soft rush of the arrow through the air and then heard the dull crash as it passed the portal. For an instant we saw a figure cross the window, and then the light had extinguished.

I could not know whether the arrow really had passed there or whether it might not have been a slave whom we had seen cross the window and who so would get the message. But the gods help those who are brave and so I made my preparations for the night. For I had told my lady that when the guards were changing a little before the hour of the risen moon, I would be under her window and waiting for a rope.

“Perhaps I die to-morrow,” I had said. “But to-night we live.”

If there had been a moon, I could not have accomplished it. For my great height alone marked me out from every man in Rome, and some had whispered about me and the lady Deeshie, for it was said

that she favoured me—and at that Rome, lascivious Rome, that believed in nothing but the flesh, laughed. For many noble Roman ladies had their fancy fighting men. Nevertheless, to be found with her in the palace, would have meant for me death by the fishes. But I would, and there was an end of it.

I found myself at the foot of the wall in the dark night and to reach it had crawled on my long belly for the last fifty strides. I wondered if the rope would be there, for if not, I knew there would be nothing for me but to return. Yet to go down into the sand without seeing my lady-love once again, was more than I could bear.

No, it was not there—nothing but the black wall, and it running up a hundred feet or more. Vainly did I crawl along the base of the wall to feel with my fingers and to wonder if I had mistaken the place. But, as it happened, there was but that single window in that high wall at this point.

Yet would I lie there until midnight at least—though longer I dare not, for sleep was needful for the sand, and I knew that many a gladiator had let sweet life slip through his fingers because his hand had faltered through a night spent in debauch before he should fight. For in all this, I did not let my red head run away with me. Yet shall you learn that though mortals may plan, at the long last the gods over-ride all.

I had lain there for perhaps an hour, fearing each moment that the moon would rise. when I heard a thin scattering on the wall.

Nearer and nearer came the sound, and then, as I lay there, an end of rope had hit me on the face, as

though it had fallen out of the sky. I had not seen it, for indeed I had thought of all other than the rope which I so ardently desired.

Then, light clothed as I was, I had swung myself knot by knot up the face of the wall, walking up it with my naked feet as though I had been a fly. And each moment I feared the hail of the Roman sentry from above, even though I knew the starlight was faint.

And then I had dived head first through the narrow opening that gripped my shoulders as I passed in, to feel the arms of my beloved about my neck.

We stood there a moment in the silence and breathing as thousands of lovers had done before. The faint perfume of her hair came to me for me to gather her unbraided hair in heavy handfuls within my two hands and to bury my face deep in them.

She clung to me there in the darkness, all the rebellion now gone out of her small body, and so after a little while had lifted her lips to mine.

"The last night," was all I could murmur to her in excuse of my coming, "and to-morrow the sand."

"To-night your lips and to-morrow the razor-barbs of Clistris," said she, in a whisper.

I suppose that we ought to have made love together, but in that last night, at least in the beginning, there was little love though much talking.

And yet with an Irishman is not all love, talk too?

"Shadow, you know that it is death to be found here with me," she said, wonderingly. "And you, knowing that Clistris waits for you to-morrow. Oh! how I love you for it!" And with that she had clung closer to bury her head in my breast.

"There is more than Clitris waiting for me to-morrow," I said, as I felt the blood run to my head with the thought of it.

"What is that?" she asked again, wonderingly.

"Only the empire of the world that I told you about the night of the burning of the galleys," said I, "with you sitting on the top as my queen by the side of me."

With that, in the faint starlight that came through the window, I could see her dear eyes fixed upon me, for we were both standing.

I think in that moment she believed I had gone mad, for she said to me:

"Is it that you are all mad in this month of moons? For the soothsayers prophesied to Nero himself that it was the month of madness and of mad things."

"And I am not mad," said I, "but the soundest man in Rome this very minute."

And with that, without more ado, I told her of the final plan, and of how after the Games, I was to head the gladiators with Severus leading the legionaries to the conquest of the Roman world.

She was silent for a little while after I had made an end, though I told it with the great glory itself. And then she had said in the simple way that she had:

"And Shadow, what if you die in the sand?"

"Then is the game finished, and I and you and all of us but the sport of fancies and dream creatures."

"'Tis that I am often thinking," the little creature said to me. "That we are just dreams and this life a dream and that we dream out of one life into another—but to what awakenings?"

“It was a dream when I saw you first that day in the courtyard, and yet a dream that, like you, was familiar to me. It was a dream when I ground the lady Thora to death under the wheels—a mad dream. And here, here also it is a dream that I have dreamt before . . .” and she shivered a little, to cling closer to me.

And then she had added, almost under her breath : “And to-morrow ? What if to-morrow be a dream of death ? ”

“Death is the greatest dream of all,” said I—“for sometimes I’m thinking that it is the only dream—the only illusion. And I tell you that I will kill Clistris in the sand to-morrow. I *know* it. And what if I should dream that last dream ? Shall I not some day dream on into other lives and meet you that are my dream-mate ? ”

“Do not say it ! ” she said suddenly clinging to me. “I cannot bear it, Shadow mine. Is there no way that you can avoid this last dream of all and the danger of it ? Do not the Christians themselves that I despise say that their White Christ who was a brave man, asked that he might not drink of the bitter draught that was death ? Is there no way out ? ”

“No way but over the body of Clistris,” said I. “Do you think that even you, my dear lady, could turn me from the path of death that is the path of glory itself ? ” I asked, the blood rising again in my hair. Oh but that was the queer love-making, and all.

“Do you think that I would have put the empire of the world into the scales and let Clistris stand in the

swing of the balance without knowing what I was doing? And if it comes to that, I don't know this minute which means the most to me—to beat the greatest fighting man in Rome except myself—or to win to the empire.”

“Oh, but it is you that are the queer man,” said she speaking in the Irish way that she had learned from me.

“And it is I that have the great pride in you,” she added, after a moment.

“And it is I that have the great pride in myself,” said I victoriously.

With that she had pulled down my red head to kiss me on the place where the hair meets the forehead.

“But I fear that same empire,” said the little woman. “I am in the great dread of it, and maybe every woman would fear anything that rivalled her—for that is the way of us women. And I am a woman, too, Shadow,” said she simply.

“Are you?” said I, with wonder in my voice and not knowing what to say with the queer feeling I got in the hollow of the stomach if you rightly understand me, where we get all the feelings that matter, as she said those last words.

“And I am a woman, too, Shadow.” It was a sort of revealing.

“Who knows what to-morrow brings? To-night we have for ours,” she said quickly, ardently. “Not twice shall I ask you what once I asked you that night in the galley.”

I looked at her again there in the starlight that glimmered faintly on her white face and struck fire from

the green eyes of her like some thing out of the night.

"I am your dear woman," said she again. "I shall always be yours whatever the sand may bring—in life and through life into death itself. And now, just a little while . . . while we still have each other . . ." she faltered a little, ". . . will you not take that which I offer—that I offered once before and you would not . . . ? It is your pride," added she after a little, and so was angry, as I could feel in the voice of her.

"And maybe 'tis not pride, but just a feeling," said I. "And I don't know from what that feeling is, but I will not come to you nor you to me until I have put you on the high throne of the world. Or," I added stupidly enough, "until I lie in that same bloody sand with a hook in me." But for all my brave talk, there was the great pride in me as I said it.

But she—she would not. The more I spoke, the closer did she cling to me, and had thrown her hair over my head as though to shut out my colder logic, and had pressed her small firm lips to mine and was caressing me there in the starlight.

And now the blood, long suppressed, began to rush through my veins and every hair on my red head a lightning conductor. And feeling that tiny body warm and firm against me, Clistris and the empire of the world itself seemed to pass in a surging and a shouting. I was blinded and dazed by something that came from inside me, as we lay there, body to body.

And then, in the very moment that I had nearly yielded to her love and my own, there came that queer

thing—that queer deathless thing that lurks in the heart of every Irishman—that contrariness that itself is so like a woman. And I had broken her from me as though I had been the woman and she the man, and I had said to her :

“ There are things that are dark to me—and one of them is why on this last night I will not take the gift you offer. But it is not coldness and it is not pride—and yet it is pride—it is the pride of life and of death—it is the thing that men call honour.”

With that she had drawn away from me, and her jade eyes looked at me as though they would strike into me. And she whispered urgent :

“ But you have shamed me. Once and twice have I offered you the virgin gift of myself—the gift that none have taken—not again shall I offer it. But the next time you shall come to me and beg of me the thing that to-day you refuse, if that day be a thousand years from now. Shadow ! Shadow ! ”

She said it with such reproach that my heart failed within me.

With that, she had broken into a fit of weeping and then had nested in my arms, and there we lay in the starlight upon her couch for a short long hour. Lay there until the sound of a Roman trumpet came silvern through the starlight.

I think we must have slept a little, for the drawn out wail came to me as from the far away. In a moment I had put her away from me and had sat up a little on the long low couch to listen. It was the trumpet announcing the dawn.

And lo ! as I looked through the window, there was the shadow of the dawn,

It was only then I remembered the rope which I had forgotten and which swung there idly outside.

"It is the dawn," said I, whispering. And she hung to me a-shiver in the chill air.

"I was dreaming," she said. "I dreamt I saw you stretched in the sand with your left eye torn out—and near you I saw Clistris also stretched. A strange dream."

"A strange dream and only half of it true," said I, "and that half, Clistris."

"Oh! the rope! the rope! We had forgotten it," she said.

"It is dawn and maybe it is death,"—said she. "But we two have spent this last night together whatever may come after. And I have loved you and you me—and nothing can take that from us—can take that memory that is the loveliest thing of life."

With that she had taken my head in hers and had kissed me once upon the forehead, and so I, sanctified, as it seemed to me for all my pagan heart, had slipped through the window and had slid the rope down the wall.

But the perfume of her hair and the lovelight of her eyes are with me to-day. And that is all two thousand years ago.

## THE TWENTY-EIGHTH MEMORY—AND THE LAST

### DEATH IN THE SAND

AND so I come to my last memory of all, for all things must have an end, even though the end of the day be but the door of to-morrow.

The dawn that heralded the last of the Games ran in great fan-shaped streaks that struck upwards into the blue ether as though they would cleave the very heart of heaven. Great rays that lifted up over the horizon like the spokes of a great wheel to stab the tenuous air, and underneath, the sleeping wonder that was Rome with its palaces and high walls. Two millions of sleeping people.

Save for the few short hours by the side of Deeshie, I had slept but little on this day of empire or of death, and when old Lupus came to shake me by the shoulder, I had been dreaming—not of Deeshie, nor of the fight to come, but of Ireland. For I thought I was a boy again on the green hills of Connemara and my mother was calling to me from the doorway. Very clear I could see her in her green robe and with the dark hair of her bound with the silver band with the emerald set in it that my father, the king, had given to her.

“Come out of the rain, alannah!” she called, for it was raining—the soft rain of Ireland—and there was beauty and a great love in her blue eyes. In my

dream, I turned to her, and in that moment there was but the empty doorway.

And, as is the way of dreams, the little Dark Man—Cuchullin himself—standing close by me, his small dark head hanging down and looking at something on the ground—and as I looked upon him, I loved him. And my eyes, following his, saw there on the green grass a red patch—a patch that spread and spread about me, until I was standing there in the middle of it—and Cuchullin gone from me.

It was at that moment that I felt the hand of Lupus on my shoulder.

“ ’Tis the hour,” said he. “ ’Tis the day, the great day for you to be up and doing. Don’t you hear the trumpets ? ”

The silver call came to me as I lay in the twitterlight ’twixt sleep and waking. A single call from the Palatine that was taken up from hill to hill, until the round City of Rome had been ringed by the silver call.

I lay there heavy for a moment, for the shadow of the dream was still on me.

“ The men are ready,” whispered Lupus. “ All is prepared for after the fight. The signal will be the three blasts of the trumpet—and then, hey ho ! for the empire of the world ! ”

“ But first there is the trident of Clistris,” I said, laughing a little at his eagerness.

“ To think that the empire of the world should hang on the end of a trident ! ” said Lupus. “ And there was no need to go down into the sand at all, little master,” said Lupus, inventing a new title for me in the tricky way that he had. “ Could you not have slipped the noble Clistris by the noose or knife

after you had made your bid for empire? But what kind of a man are you—you Red Shadow?"

"I am myself," said I. "And whether you know it or not, I would rather feel my sword running into the belly of Clistris than have the round world handed to me on a platter this very minute." And with that I laughed a little at him again.

As for me, I was not going down into the sand until all had been made ready. The morning I spent in idleness, for the Games did not, on this last day, open until the afternoon, as was Cæsar's whim, "he wanted the night to show something to the people of Rome," he said with his high titter. And Cæsar was still locked up in his palace and planning what devilment the gods alone knew. It was said that he had sent messengers round and about Rome for some secret purpose—but who knew anything in that city of lies and spies?

The sun rose to high noon—a brassy August sun, red as a wolf's throat, and then began to decline. The streets of Rome were filled with citizens who streamed to the arena to see this last fight of all and the approaches to the Circus were choked. Wagers ran high and noblemen had placed all they had in life upon either Clistris or myself, for the madness of August had taken them.

As I came near to the arena, carried in a litter by my comrades as though I were a king, there stole to me from out the circus a noise like the murmur of bees on a summer's afternoon. It rose and fell, a great droning there under that bloody sky with the red spears striking downwards from behind the hill out of the maw of that gloomy sun, over which

hung a leaden canopy of cloud. There was a lowering in the atmosphere and the shadow of death over all, and the wild beasts in their dens under the circus sent out howl on howl through the shuddering air.

I made my comrades set me down near the Circus so that I might walk in alone, under my arms my pipes, for which I had a purpose as shall be seen.

The humming took a higher note as I drew near to that place of death. The reek of the stale blood in the heavy air sickened. My face was white, as I saw in a copper mirror that hung in that place—a memory I have very clear—and my eyes stared palely out of the frame of my hair. Yet were they steady enough.

For the word had come to me from Cæsar that I was not to make my obeisance with Clistris, but was to take my pipes and play the round of the great Circus as I had done that night in the palace before I fought with Spindicus. “Play,” said he, “and it is I that will light the baal for your playing.”

And what tune should I choose but that same Moderederoo, that came down from the ould ancient times before Cæsar or Rome were thought of, or could be thought to be thought of. Well, if I was going to my death I would also be going to glory and would make glory about my passing, as was always the way of the old Irish, that would make hell at a wedding and merry at a funeral.

So I found myself with the pipes over my left shoulder on the hither side of the great gate through which was the entrance for the gladiators. From where I stood I could hear that buzzing come out of the great hive that was the Circus and with that I thought the time had

come for me to buzz myself a little to hearten myself and to rise my chant of victory or my dirge as it might be. So with that, I lay my lips about the pipe and started the blast on the chanter.

At the first wild skirl of the pipes, there was a sudden drop in that other buzz from the inside, as when men smoke out a hive of wasps, and then, as the great gates sank, and all Rome saw me standing there in the frame of the gate, there went up such a murmur of welcome and appraisal as sent the blood in red shivers through my body.

So I was through and treading the sand under the wall, whilst from around and above, running upwards into the skies, a hundred thousand throats shouted at me under that brazen sun. And somewhere over the walls there came a red glare that challenged the sun itself. But what that would be, I could not say.

I suppose the first face I should have expected to light on there would have been the face of my lady—but it was not. It was the face of a common Roman—a little cit or shopkeeper, with red round face and goggling eyes of pale blue with tiny black irises, who was staring at me from the side as I marched in. I do not know why it is that the face of this man should have come with me down the ages, for he was but a common fellow, but it has. There he sat, and there he stared, his eyes a-goggle, at me, and I would know him to-day if I set my eyes on him.

Oh! but it was I that was the proud man that day as I strutted it around and about the great Circus, in a light that was the queer thing entirely—for it was like red flame haunting golden sun. As I raised *Modedereroo*, the crowds shouted again, a little murmur

that grew like a flame to a mighty roar of acclaim and greeting. For they knew they were looking at a champion, maybe the likes of whom Rome would never see again. And the next time they saw that same champion it would not be as a poor gladiator may be, but as their own emperor.

So I let my lungs go into the chanter and the little Red Fox running in and out and playing hide and seek with himself in the corn and with a little red torch on the end of his little red tail—or maybe a thousand little red torches in the madness that is Modderederoo.

Oh there was going to be no dirge at my passing, if it was to be a passing, but a tripping tune with the heart of Ireland beating in the middle of it—and so I gave it to them, with the great pride in me as I saw my lady sitting high up there by the side of Nero and she looking down at me with all her soul in the eyes of her—for indeed she had now nothing to hide. Oh the lovely eye-slant and hollow cheeks of her and her small smooth head and the black hair coiled low on the nape of it.

As for Nero, as I came at him across the sand, the pipes going, he sat there with an evil grin on his purple face—a sort of mad triumph in his piggish eyes that I had never before seen on him. And so I stood before him in the sand and, still keeping the chanter going, I freed up my right hand from the pipes and flung it above my head in the salute of the Gael. But never the smile from him, only that evil grin—and all the time Deeshie by his side looking down at me with all the love and hope and admiring of her in her face. She had a red flower in her hand, a great red rose it

was I saw as I drew near, and as she leaned over the stone rail above me, it seemed to catch in her dress and drop like a dark blood-clot down the grey wall.

But now there was to be an end of the piping and a beginning of the dancing—the sand dance as the gladiators had the name for it, the dance that ended in death. For there was to be no quarter given or taken, I knew that, and where two went down into the sand, only one would return.

So I finished my sweep of the arena, and still playing, passed under the great archway out of sight of the crowds now silent.

The blood was nicely hot in me and just what I wanted to make me limber overright Clistris the Cat, who no doubt was already sharpening his claws for me.

All this time, the red was growing not only in the western sky but also in the eastern, and some of the people had turned about to stare up over the high walls of the circus and to mutter superstitiously—and always Nero sat above, grinning victoriously. And there was old Lupus before me, whispering as always: “Remember, little brother, the twist and the double turn of the net—and watch his wrist and not his face.” For Clistris we had learned through our spies had developed a double cast—that was a right-left controlling the net in the air like a bird so as to puzzle his opponent as he sprang to avoid. “And you will not disgrace me, me, Lupus—” and as the gods are my witness, all the soul of the old fighting man was in the milky white of the blinded eye.

It was in that instant that a queer shivery feeling came over me—for I felt that all this had happened before. Lupus and Clistris and the sand and my lady

—even Nero himself sitting up there, in some far-off clime that was maybe out of space and out of time. We Irish called it “walking on our own graves—” on the graves of our memories. But I think that was the first time I ever had the feeling that I had done things before in another life.

It gave me the queer start, it did.

But all this time Lupus was lacing my mail on me and adjusting my helm and seeing that the eye-slits in my shield were clear. Very carefully, as a maid that makes her mistress's toilet, did he see to the latches of my sandals and to the fastening of my greaves. He also looked carefully at the hook in my shield on the chance that it might engage one of Clistris's razor barbs and twist it out of his hand. Though how I, in my armour, if I disarmed him, was to come at that fleet-footed devil was more than he or I could say, unless I shed my own harness.

I had made the passes with my long sword in my shadow play to fine-edge muscle and eye, and Lupus had whispered his last word into my ear, pulling down my red head to his, for I was still unhelmeted, with his old arm to say: “Remember the reverse throw and remember that if he shows you twelve tricks he will yet have a thirteenth in fee to surprise the life out of you.” But I—I was not red for nothing—I did not tell old Lupus that I, too, had my own thrust that alone I had been perfecting through many weary months—the sudden drop of the body and the upward lunge from the end of the long stride, with death on the end of the blade, that maybe would do the business of the noble Clistris.

“And now,” said I, turning to Lupus, where he stood

near looking through the gate, "good-bye, comrade, and *gurramohuguth!* for all. 'Tis much you have taught me not only of fighting but of friendship, and again I thank you. You have been my father and my brother—and if I come up out of the sand this day you shall sit on my right hand in my kingdom. And if I don't," said I with the gay laugh at him, "then we'll meet on Olympus—where you may be sure I'll be cock o' the walk as well as here!" With that I threw my free arm about the old fellow's neck and kissed him on his withered cheek to his great astonishment—so that I saw two great tears roll slowly out of his eyes.

"You that I have loved," he said ". . . you that I have loved . . ." and they were the last words I heard as the great gates sank in the sand. I stood there, the pillar of me, helmed and ready, my long shield on my right arm, my sword in my left hand.

And there across the expanse of the sand in the other gateway, I saw, standing carelessly enough with the fine scorn on him as always, Clistris, naked save for a loin cloth and not even a sandal to his feet, his head shaven. He was the lovely picture of a man with the tan on his body and legs and the cruel eyes of him set in that high narrow shaven head—not a bit of muscle anywhere and yet all like velvet. And at the sight of him, something again ran through me—the feeling that all this had I lived before. But it passed.

At the sight of us, the greatest fighting men in Rome and without the shadow of defeat on either of the two of us, the crowd shouted—such a shout as for a moment challenged that distant roar that seemed to come out of the heart of the red furnace of the west, where the sun was beginning to sink.

Through it all, Nero sat there with that evil grin upon him.

Slowly, we advanced upon each other, over the hot sand, until we stood in the centre of the arena—and I still in a sort of dream from walking over my own grave, though the blood was running evenly enough through my veins and brain to feed me with thought and cunning.

And now we were standing overright one another and eyeing one another. I looked this man over and could find no fault with his perfection, and the desperate thing about it all was that I could not hate him and so could not get that fine edge that only hate can give to the Irishman, who always thinks most quickly and most clearly when he is in a passion. There was something so neutral about this noble Clitris—something in a way that stood outside humanity—that I could no more hate him in that instant than if he had been a stone image.

He had his net wound about his left arm, for as I have said in another place, like myself he was a left-handed fighter. His trident he nursed across his right forearm as though it were a child.

He looked me over with the eyes of a bird—those glittering brown eyes, as though seeking for a breach in the walls of my city—and I, seeing him there before me with his sting lying harmless and useless across his forearms and his net rolled, did not know what to do with him. But only for the little drawing breath of a child when it takes its first look at the world, and, small blame to him!

For in that instant I had flashed at him to strike him through the body ere he could free his net and

trident, hoping to take him by surprise. And yet even as I flashed at him, his loose body had tautened and seemed to spring to one side as though from some interior coiled force, for the point of my long sword to graze him as it swept past.

There had been a poised silence as we had viewed each other, and now there came the raucous scream from the one hundred thousand throats gathered there that summer's afternoon, as they saw my sudden play.

And now Clistris, disdaining to flee, slowly unwound his net from about his left arm and let his trident fall on the sand out of the hollow of his right arm, and left me standing there, looking like a great *omadhaun*. But ere he could get it clear, I was on to him again and this time I nearly did his business at the first go off, for he had not expected it and only saved himself by dropping like a stone on the sand so that my sword kissed his shaven neck—and then he ran, you may be sure, and was off and away before I could draw back my sword arm to get another offer at him. At which the crowd yelled with laughter—in it the devil's delight.

But I was not following him. Instead, I stood there waiting for his return, for I would husband every heart-beat. And so, after a little he came slowly back again, his net waving, lethargic over his head and his trident with its shining barbs a-gleam under the sullen sun. And I, waiting, would see what he would be at.

He began again that slow circling movement, ringing me in the sand and I pivoted to meet him, turning as he circled. Around and around me, he walked, as though seeking entrance to the beleaguered city—

and I content to let him, for he was making ten yards to my one, and in the sand every little tells. But the fellow's condition was hair fine, and if tiring came, it would come from me, with my heavy helm and shield and greaves and mailed left arm. Already the helm, lighter than most though it was, began to oppress me under that crimson glare, yet did it also shade my eyes a little as we turned—and he watching for the moment when I should be dazzled to let fly with his net.

And sure enough, let fly he did. It was on the fourth or fifth circling when he had hoped to take me off my guard, and he waited until the sun should strike through the slitted helm and he with his fan shaped back to it and untroubled. For in a moment he had thrown the net from underneath—an under-hand throw I had never seen before—from the hip, almost as a boy will jerk a stone.

And he nearly succeeded in his design. For I, waiting for his hand to lift over his shoulder, saw the net sweep upwards towards me and only that at the moment I was moving and so could jump quickly on him, he had netted me. As it was, the leads whistled as they ran over my head—but if I thought to reach him with the sword before he could recover I was in error most grievous.

For even as he missed, he had flung the net away and back to himself and was off in the sand ere I could get in at him. At which the crowd laughed again, hell to their souls!

Again and yet again, he came into me with his circling movement—and now I knew what he would be at. It was to be a war of attrition. He was to tire me out,

trusting to greater bulk and heavy armour to undo me—and then, when weary, to make an end of me.

Already the helm was wearing me down under that sun, which roasted through the metal to run down the back of my neck, down through the spine, and I dizzy in the sand. The very walls of the circus seemed to dance under that sun, but still I fought on, only missing the swoosh of the net by inches and that devil there overright me, licking his lips stealthily and ever drawing in on me.

I had often heard the fighters say that some of these *retiarii* could hold you with their eyes as a snake will a bird, but never had I believed it until this hot afternoon in Rome, when I was fighting for love and life and an empire. There was a bright intentness in the eyes of *Clistris* that made me dizzy.

But now, I thanked *Brigid*, that was my own deity, that the sun had sunk below the edge of the Circus, although the red glare and the roar grew ever greater—a strange thing indeed. For I felt the helm heavy—so heavy . . .

It was in this moment that, in the silence and the people waiting for the end—my end—there came to me a cracked voice from the far away: “Doff your helm, lad! Doff your helm!” in the secret argot of the gladiators that they guarded so jealously, so that none there understood.

It was *Lupus*, watching from God knows what hidden nook, for the Greek could hide himself between two bricks. And by the gods! he had the right of it there.

So did I lift my two hands to free the helm, but, cumbered as they were by sword and shield, I could

not, and a sudden rush by Clistris, seeing me engaged, sent my heart flying into my throat. But that I avoided, and with that, I drove my sword point down into the sand so as to have it ready, and with the other loosed and slipped up my heavy helm to let it roll in the sand. But even as I did so, that devil was in on me again, running long and low like a leopard that stretches its belly to the sand. And without waiting to use the net which he trailed behind him like the sea-beast trails his tail, he made a pass at me with the trident, that I only slipped by a side-ways leap and a run most ignominious.

And now was I in dire strait, for there was my sword sticking in the sand, and there was Clistris and he with his eight-foot trident standing guard over it. And now the crowd shouted, believing it to be the end, for I was weaponless.

It was little they knew me or Éirinn. But had they taken a glance at my hair, then might knowledge have struggled into their thick skulls.

There was I with nothing but the naked hands, and there was Clistris and he with a net and a trident with a point on it like the devil's pitchfork.

With that, I stooped behind my shield to gather a fist of fine sand unbeknownst to him, and then I walked in on him and he waiting with the trident ready to flash at my bare head. He stood there like a thing of marble—and a beautiful stand he had, with the red sun shining warm on his tanned ivory, and as one will notice such things in such moments, a tiny blue vein running under the skin of the right biceps where the strain of the trident brought it up.

It was in that moment I shouted—let such a howl

out of me that it might have wakened the Seven Sleepers—the war-cry of the O'Donnells that were my mother's family. "O'Donnell aboo-oo-oo! Look! Look!" I cried and stared above his head as though something hung there.

Startled out of himself for the first time in his poised life maybe, he glanced up, and as he did so, I dashed to fling the handful of sand I had into the staring eyes and, without stopping, as blinded, he tried to get the sand away, had plucked my sword out of the sand by his side and, by Jupiter! would have spitted him with it in the same moment had not the fighting man's instinct in him made him leap away, still half blinded, like the wind and all.

Well, you never heard anything like the howls and laughter of the mob when they saw the trick I had served him. As for him, he was busy clearing his eyes from the sand nor would he let me come near him until he had done so, but ran like a roebuck.

But this time, when he came on, there was death in his eye. I believe he could have forgiven me anything but that trick that made him ridiculous in the eyes of Rome. On he came, I say, with the weighted net swishing slowly above his head like some living thing—now first over the right shoulder, then over the left in the diagonal swing that he had invented.

And then, as I stood there unhelmed, still troubled from this last bout, and wishing most urgently to make an end before my lady, he had let it fly—a beautiful throw from behind the left shoulder, over which shot the great net—a fling such as had never been seen in that sand.

I saw the long net curl above me to envelop, but

as it did so I had sprung to the right. There was a flick of the wrist and the net without falling had sprung after me like a living thing—the reverse throw of which Lupus had warned me. And it very nearly did the trick, it even brushed my shoulder as it fell and caught the edge of my shield to foul the hook and dragging it from off my arm.

Now was I without shield but with sword. Even as the shield fell, Clistris had darted in on me with his trident to drive at my open body—a great stroke.

But even as he drave, I was off. And now such a footrace was seen in that sand as Rome had never witnessed before. How the mob howled with joy to see my long legs eating up the ground and, for my filet had come unbound when I removed the helmet, my red hair flying in the wind and death at my heels with a trident in its hand. How they shouted again!

And now I thanked my gods for the green hills of Connemara where I had learned to run and those same long legs. For if I had my sword and the greaves to weight me down, the man behind had an eight-foot trident and a net, which are hell's own things to run with. Nevertheless, if he had dared to drop the net, it would have gone hard with me—but he feared that if he let it slip from him I would reach it in our circling and destroy it with my sword—something that had been done before by swordsmen.

So, after we had run the circuit of the arena two or three times with the bloody sun staring into our eyes, Clistris yielded himself to circumstance. Each circuit I had tried to get near to my shield to pick it up and each time he trod so close on my heels that I did not

dare to stoop to do so. But as I began to distance him on the last circling, and he with the weight of the net against the longest legs in Ireland, I made my circuit close to my shield and had picked it up and had turned ready to face him again.

I could not forbear to look up at my little lady—but it was little chance I got to see her admiration, for, seeking to give me no respite, Clistris had come in at me again with the circling net.

I knew that the time had not yet come for him to slip me the unknown trick which I knew he would have in keeping, even as I had my own. The trick upon which he would put his fate and mine. But he had others.

And now, he came towards me with those bright bird eyes fixed upon me and they set in the whitest face you ever saw. But there was murder in the face with the drawn lines—yet was the fellow still unscratched and I also untouched, for so far we had made a great fighting of it, matched to a hair.

But I wearied of all this, wanted again most urgently to drive my sword into the ivory of his body—a sort of primal urge. It was amounting to a sort of passion in my veins and they on fire to make an end of it. But how to come at this man with body like an eel—how was I to do that? That was where I was *moidered*.

What chance had I to lure him in on the point of my stabbing sword and he with eight feet of steel to my three—and a net as well? How to get inside that long guard?

And now the roar of flames was plain to be heard—a continuous booming noise, and the whole circus

seemed to be spinning about me and I with the sweat running down me. They say that when at the last gasp, one's whole past comes before one—but as for me, I can only say that in that moment I had only one urge—the urge to flesh my blade in that slippery, ivory body.

Even the lady Deeshie became remote—all but that eel-man in front of me.

It was when we had worked ourselves directly under the throne from which Nero and my lady looked down upon us, that I unleashed the first of the two tricks which I had in reserve. As he stopped for a moment in his circling to stare at me, as though he would fascinate me there in the sand, I holding my long shield out before me as cover drew back my left arm with the sword in it to send it hurtling towards him at the moment when the last of the sun was staring into the two eyes of him—an Irish trick never seen in Rome.

This was putting my life upon a throw with a vengeance, for if he guarded my sword with his trident and it fell close to him, then was I disarmed and finished—for I could not again try the trick of the sand. Never had a swordsman turned into a spearman in that arena, and so he was unready. The glittering sword spun point towards him in the air turning like a wheel. Too late did he try to guard with his long trident. Spinning, it struck him, flensing the cheek like a butcher's knife, to send the blood raining down over face and breast.

But never a word from that devil. Never a word. Blinded from the sting and the blood, he did not see me flash by him to pick up my sword where it happily

had fallen in the sand some paces beyond. But quick he recovered despite blood and pain, and turned, a horrid sight under the ruddy sun with the red runnels covering his face.

And now there was death in the eyes that burned undimmed and unquenchable in the mask of the face. He slid towards me over the sand with his net moving in a novel way, for he was twirling it now in front and now behind him as though to *moider* me. And I knew the time had come for his last trick and to make an end, and even that mob, silent, inheld, watching death in the sand, seemed to feel it too.

Many times had Clistris tried the reverse throw that summer's afternoon, and each time, I, watching the wrist, had stood my ground to let the net flirt to one side in the expectancy that I would, to avoid its first movement, jump under it, and so be trapped. But this fore and aft twirl boded something new.

Around swung the net amid the roar of flame and glare, for all Rome seemed on fire. Then it had come out from behind his back and over his head to cover me and take me in its toils. But I, watching Clistris's wrist, saw the reverse jerk and so, as before, stood my ground to see the net sweep sideways, meaning to run in as soon as it should be clear, despite the long trident which stood at the ready.

I stood there, I say, watching it sweep away and then as I made ready to spring forward, to my terror I saw it return like a wild thing through the air and as I sprang, saw it swoop upon me like a great hawk. It was his last trick—the right-left-right—the treble-reverse, which had never been seen in that arena.

It fell upon me like a cloak of doom to prison my

head and shield-arm. I felt it tighten as he drew in the rope and saw him run in with his trident aimed at a throat now naked to his prongs. But even as he did so, and I felt myself dizzy in the sand, and the shouts of the multitude came faintly to my ears, as from distance immeasurable, my wits came staggering back to me.

And with that I, the Red Shadow, had with head and shield arm pinioned loosed my last trick. For, lunging forward with head bending almost to the ground I had struck upwards at the rushing death, to feel a blare of agony shoot through my loins when Clistris, seeing my sudden stoop, had lowered the point to strike deep into my loins. And I—I, thanks be to the powers! I, too, had struck home, for I felt the point of my sword enter the soft belly, run upwards as into a sheath, and then strike against the small ribs—a final, comfortable sound.

Sideways I came, crashing down in the sand to see Clistris as through a bloody mist lying there with his distorted face and the life-blood pouring from the wound where the sword still stayed.

And I knew that, in that moment, love and all the beautiful dreams had gone a-begging in the sand of the Roman arena. I looked upwards to where my little lady sat looking downwards upon me in the sand—looking so kindly it seemed and smiling a farewell through a bloody mist.

Gone were the dreams of power. Gone the hills of Connemara. Gone all things but the power to live again. And even as I looked at her, she had come springing over the stone coping and down the face of the wall to strike the sand near my head, a great leap

entirely. And she had run to me to crouch there in the sand and to take my head in her lap.

"Good-bye, Shadow mine," I heard her whisper. And then her face all suddenly was very far away. . . .

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